

*Albert B. Ramsdell,
Salem, Mass.*

Detective Deadwood Dick's Great Case!



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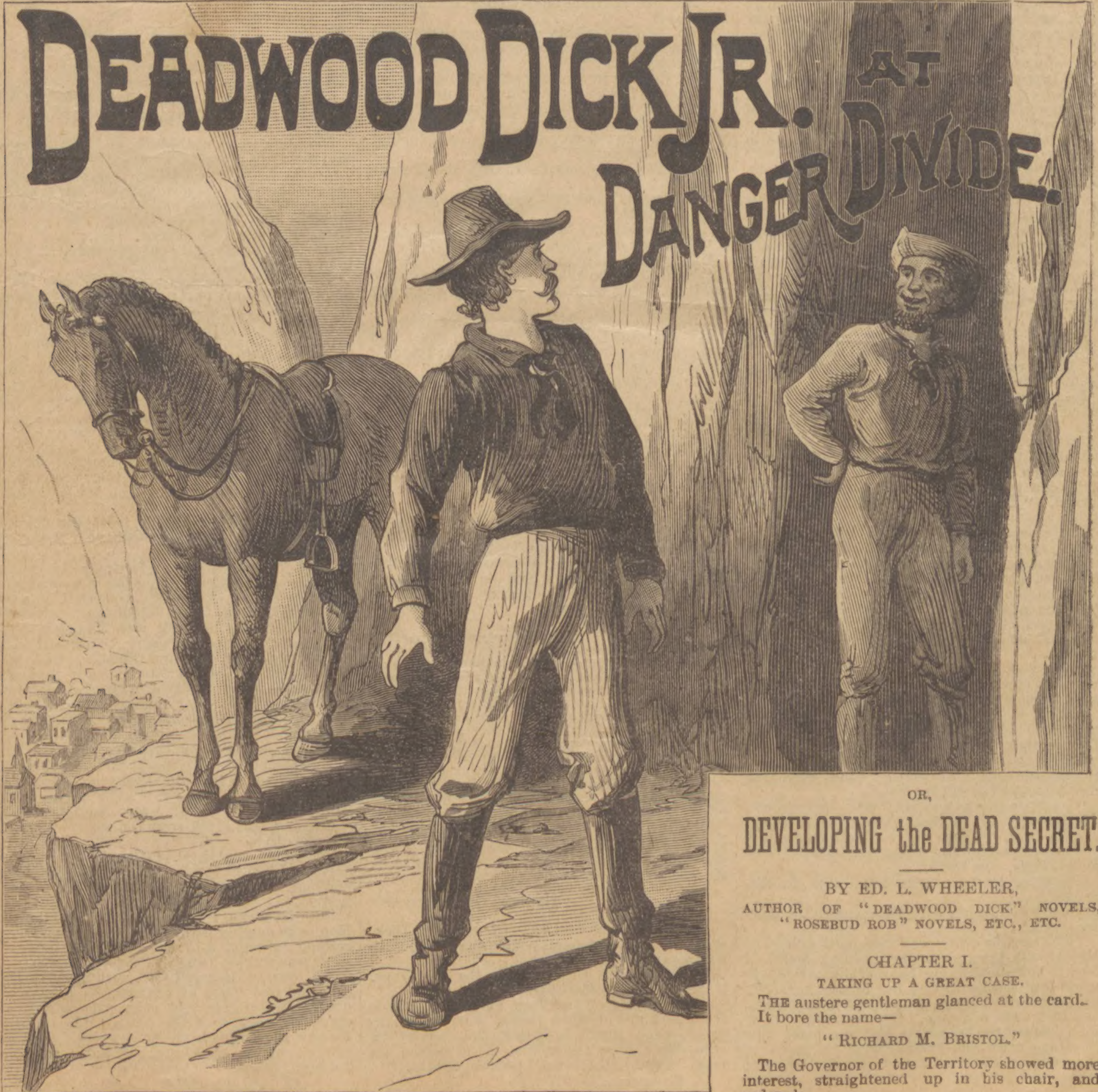
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OR,
DEVELOPING the DEAD SECRET.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS,
"ROSEBUD ROB" NOVELS, ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.
TAKING UP A GREAT CASE.
THE austere gentleman glanced at the card.
It bore the name—
"RICHARD M. BRISTOL."

The Governor of the Territory showed more
interest, straightened up in his chair, and
ordered:
"Show the gentleman in immediately, and do

AND THERE, IN THE OPENING, STOOD THE MAN WITH WHOM HE HAD BEEN TALKING.

not allow me to be interrupted by any one while he is here."

The functionary bowed and withdrew, leaving the governor still looking at the card in his hand.

"So, this is Bristol, the detective, at last, is it?" he mused. "It has taken him a long time to get here, or even to acknowledge my letter. But, he is not too late for the case— Would that he were!"

The door opened, and a young man entered the office.

He was a handsome, fearless-looking fellow, under thirty, and of powerful build.

"Governor Woodlow?" he interrogated, coolly.

"Yes," was the response; "and you are Detective Bristol?"

"At your service, sir," and Deadwood Dick, Jr., bowed.

"Take a seat, sir," the governor invited. "It is some time since I sent for you. You did not respond to my letter, even."

"And I suppose I am too late to be of any service to you, now," Dick supplemented, as he took a chair.

"No, you are not too late, but, would to heaven that you were! On the contrary, you are just in time to make use of the first clew we have been able to get hold of in the terrible affair."

"A clew, eh? I am glad of that, anyhow," averred Dick. "The chief forwarded your letter to me, but it has been a good many days catching me. It came into my hands the day before yesterday, and I set out for here at once, though I hardly thought I should be in time to be of any use."

"I suppose you can guess what I require of you?"

"To assist in trying to find the murderer of your son?"

"Exactly. And may your search not be in vain?"

"I have seen something of it in the papers, but do not understand all the particulars. You will have to give them to me, and then this clew of which you speak—that may prove helpful."

"You shall have them, every one, and I will answer any and every question you may want to ask. I will do anything to aid in clearing up this awful mystery, and to bring the guilty one to the rope he deserves. You *must* find him, Bristol, if you have to turn the world over endwise to do it!"

And the feeling which the governor betrayed showed how thoroughly in earnest he was.

"I always do my best, sir, in every case I undertake," Dick assured.

He was composed and self-possessed and as much at home, in the presence of the governor of a Territory, as he would have been in the office of a common police sergeant, and would have been the same in the presence of the President of the United States.

"I can well believe that," the governor returned. "Your reputation is proof enough for it."

The case, in brief, was this: About a month before, the governor's son had been cruelly and mysteriously murdered, and the murdered man's little son, a boy of five, stolen. The detectives had been hunting ever since for the murderer and the missing boy; but, although the governor had offered a big reward, the guilty one was still at large, and the little grandson still missing.

Deadwood Dick understood this much of the case, but now that he was called upon to take a hand in the game, he wanted every particular.

"Well, governor, give me all the points you can about the case, and I'll see what I can do. Tell me everything that has happened in the tragedy, and everything besides that you think has any bearing on the matter. But, keep that clew you speak of till the last."

"I will do just as you ask," was the response.

"I am only too anxious to lend you every aid in my power. Where will you have me begin?"

"There was nothing of importance previous to the crime, was there?"

"Nothing that we have been able to discover."

"Very well, begin with the event of the murder, then."

"The terrible crime was done on the night of May twenty-third, or in the morning hours of May twenty-fourth. On that morning my daughter-in-law awoke to find her husband dead by her side—killed by a knife-thrust in his breast, and their little son gone. Her piercing shrieks soon aroused the household, and in a brief time the whole town was shocked with the news of the awful crime. All our local detectives went

to work at once, and others were got as soon as possible, but not a single clew could any of them discover. And that is about the whole of the matter, in few words."

The governor paused, and Bristol reflected a moment before speaking.

"Was any one suspected of the crime?"

"No, sir, no one."

"Had any suspicious person been seen around the house?"

"Not that any one had noticed."

"How was entrance gained to the room where the crime was done?"

"We suppose it was by way of a window that opened upon a porch roof."

"Were no marks found to prove that?"

"None were discovered, sir."

"It is strange, truly. Was the knife found?"

"It was not. Nothing was found—nothing whatever."

"What kind of a knife did the wound indicate it to have been?"

"The examining doctor said the wound had the appearance of having been made with a large, broad-bladed bowie."

"Had your son any enemy?"

"Not that has been discovered."

"Did he stand in the way of any one, any one whom his death could benefit?"

"I do not think so. I think I can say no, positively."

"What was your son's business?"

"He was a lawyer."

"Ha! perhaps some one who has been worsted by him—"

"No, no. His whole career has been looked into, and there is not a single case that supports that theory."

"Well, it is a mysterious affair," Dick mused. "I begin to feel an interest in it. I must see if I can do anything with the case, and as I never entertain the idea of scoring a defeat, I shall work in my own time and way in worming out this real dead secret."

"Are you ready now for the sole clew I spoke about?"

"You say it is one that you have just got hold of, I believe?"

"It came into my hands only yesterday."

"Are your other men working on it?"

"They have set out to follow it up."

"Then it is no doubt a stale clew for me to work on. But, no matter; an old clew is better than none."

"But, this is not old," the governor insisted. "It is not more than twenty-four hours old, and you are just in time to play the leading role in a plan that has been arranged."

The detective prince did not look pleased at this.

"I am not used to working on another man's plans," he observed, "but I am willing to hear what the plan is, and if it suits I will fall into line."

"Good enough!" exclaimed the governor. "That is fair, and I am willing to risk your approval of my plan."

"It is *your* own plan, then."

"Yes, it is mine."

"Well, now for the clew," said Dick.

The governor opened a drawer in his desk and took out a note, which he put in Dick's hand. This note the detective proceeded to read. It was as follows:

"DANGER DIVIDE, JUNE 25.

"TO GOV. WOODLOW:—

"DEAR SIR:—If you would like to have that grandson of yours, you can have him for twenty thousand dollars. I don't know nothing about the murder of your son, but the boy is in my hands, and you can have him for the sum named. Now don't make no mistake, and think you can rope me in, for you can't do it. Send one man to this place, with power to do up the business, and we will show him the boy alive and well, and if he will pay over the money he can take him and git. This offer is open for one month, and after that the boy will never be seen alive. So send your man, and so that we can know him and make no mistake, let him wear a cross of white braid, about a inch big, on the left lapel of his coat. No other sign or signal will be recognized. Now, show your good sense, Gov., and send along the boodle and get the kid.

"Yours with an eye to business,

"THE EVIL ONE HIMSELF."

"The Evil One himself, eh?" repeated Dick, smiling. "That note may make his eye to business a very black eye."

"That is the clew," said the governor.

"What do you make of it?"

"I make this of it," Dick answered. "It is from the hand of some person fairly well educated, who is trying to disguise that fact by the misspelling of a few words. That person is a man. Further than that I venture nothing."

"Well, four good men have set out for the place named, which is away up in the mountains to the north. They are all disguised, and each is going it alone. You might pick them out of a crowd, perhaps, by the fact that each one has lost the middle button of his coat, and has either a nail or a bit of wire in its place. To-morrow a fifth man is to set out. You can readily understand the rest of the scheme."

"Yes, and it is not a bad one, by any means."

"And now that you are here," went on the governor, "will you fall in with the programme and set out for the Divide, with the signal on your coat lapel?"

"I might usurp the place of a more competent man," Dick argued, modestly.

"Get out!" the governor cried. "Will you do it?"

"Well, if it is your wish, why—"

"It is my wish, decidedly."

"Then I'll fall in, governor, and set out to-morrow."

Half an hour later, Bristol left the office of the governor, with this commission in his pocket; viz.:

"OFFICE OF GOVERNOR OF TERRITORY.

"June 30, 18—.

"TO WHOM CONCERNED:—

"This is to certify that Richard M. Bristol, a detective on the U. S. Secret Service Staff, has been vested with the power of a Marshal of this Territory, and this is his commission. All sheriffs and others officers are hereby directed to render assistance to him whenever called upon to do so.

"BY THE GOVERNOR,

"A. WEEVER, Sec'y."

W. B. WOODLOW.

CHAPTER II.

PAYING TOLL AT THE DIVIDE.

A HOT summer day was drawing to its close. Upon a broad plateau overlooking a town nestled in the gulch below, appeared a lone horseman.

The horse was a coal-black, and spirited, and the rider was a young man, not yet thirty, of powerful build and medium height, and more than ordinarily good-looking, but he was roughly, even coarsely, dressed, and looked not unlike a miner in hunt of a more paying "locate" than Dame Fortune had favored him with of late. Really, the horse seemed to represent more value than the man did wealth.

The rider wore a wide-brimmed slouch hat, a flannel shirt, and a coat much the worse for wear. His trousers were of canvas, shiny with long use, the tops of a pair of coarse boots reached up to meet the legs and take them in. Around his waist was a belt, in which were two big, business-like five-shooters, and a bowie of formidable proportions, with a wicked turn at the point. The only thing about his dress or equipment that might have any special significance was a small white cross on the left lapel of his worn coat.

He slipped out of the saddle, and approaching the edge of the plateau nearer than he evidently cared to trust the weight of the horse, looked over and down at the scene that lay spread below.

"So this is Danger Divide, is it?" the close observer mused. "It is just about the sort of place I expected to find."

From where he stood, a pleasing vista opened to the eye. The town, which lay in a mountain-locked valley, or "pocket," consisted of some half a hundred or more habitations, half cabin and half shanty, and all were bunched in the middle of the pocket, or nearly so, on both sides of the only street. Behind them, on the right from where the observer stood, ran a rapid little stream, with a bridge at a convenient point.

This stream, passing through the pocket, lost itself in what seemed to be, as near as the eye could make out, a deep gulch. Its shadow was dark enough to support that idea, anyhow.

The keen-eyed man could not see where the stream entered the little valley, as his view on the left was cut off by a rocky wall, but the distinct sound of falling water led him to the conclusion that it fell from somewhere up along the mountain.

The valley contained, perhaps, two hundred acres, covered in places with luxuriant grass, and here and there dotted with patches of wild flowers.

But the town itself seemed to be all alive. Men were moving here and there, miners were coming in from different directions, and the place was waking from its daytime torpidity.

"A town of the usual sort, with just about the same old assortment of citizens, as I have no doubt," the dismounted rider reflected, after a searching survey of the place. "But I don't see how I am going to get down there. I followed the trail, and here I am, half a thousand feet too high."

That was true, and to all appearances the trail ended right there. But of course it did not, as the lone traveler knew.

Before he had time to explore the plateau thoroughly, after his survey of the pocket below, a voice called out:

"Hillo thar!"

Deadwood Dick—for indeed he it was, was instantly on the alert.

"Well, hillo to yourself!" he responded.

"Jess so," the voice returned. "I takes et you is travelin'."

"You make a mistake there," responded Dick. "I seem to have about reached the end of the lane."

A laugh greeted that.

"Et do look that way, now don't et," came back again, and to save him Dick was not able to locate the place from whence the voice proceeded.

"Yes, it has that appearance," Dick assented. "But, I suppose there is some way of getting down, and if you are posted, and will just show me the little joker, why I'll be greatly obliged to you."

"In course you will. I don't have ther least doubt about that part of et, me noble pilgrim; but, ther question is: How much in ther solid kerdoodleum will yer oblergashuns pan?"

"Hal! I see you are on the make."

"Wull, some thet way, I allow."

"Well, what is the usual rate of toll, then?"

"I reckon a fiver will open the portals to ther Parrydise below."

"Well, I'll give it," Dick promptly agreed.

"That is to say, I will if you will throw in a little information as well."

"It is infurmashun you is after, then?"

"Yes, I have a turn of mind that way, my unknown toll-taker."

"An' in what pertickler direction does yer reachin' out fer knowledge seem ter be inclined ter take ets flight?"

"Well, concerning the town below here. As I am going there, it will not come amiss to know a little about the place."

"Yer head is level, noble pilgrim, an' no doubtin' thet aire; an' as fer infurmashun, ef ye had ther hist'ry of Danger Divide in a printed book, two volumes wide an' morocky bound, et couldn't give et to yer no straighter nor what Cross-eyed Simm kin, which same is me."

"Then you are just the fellow I am looking for, Mr. Simm, averred Dick. "Come out and show yourself and get your fiver, and if you come up to the recommendation you have given yourself, you may get another fiver to keep this one company."

"Good enough! I'm jest ther feller you want ter see, sure as you is thar and I is hyer."

"And where in the dickens are you?" Dick demanded.

All this time he had been trying hard to locate the voice, but in vain. It seemed to come from the mouth of a narrow gorge, from which he himself had just emerged, but there was no one to be seen, and yet the voice was too plain and near to be further than a few yards away, at most.

Again did the unknown laugh.

"Et puzzles ye, do et?" he cried. "Wull, et hev puzzled a good many men afore ye hev this hyer same Danger Divide. Keep yer eye skinned in ther direction o' my talker, now, an' you'll see me. Behold, I come!"

There was a rasping, grating sound for an instant, and, much to Dick's amazement a sharp point of rock moved aside, closing up that side of the gorge through which he had come, and opening another just like it!

And there, in the new opening, stood the man with whom he had been talking!

He appeared to be about forty years old, and had a lank, muscular figure, and his general appearance went to prove that he was well used to roughing it in the mountains. His face bore the scars of many a scrimmage, and his eyes were small and bright, as they met those of Deadwood Dick.

Rather should it be said that one eye was bright as it met those of the bold Richard, for the other did not shine at all. It was twisted so far out of plumb, that it looked as though trying to get out of sight altogether.

He was roughly attired, and not a very inviting-looking individual at best. And his belt fairly bristled with weapons. He was, all in all, a dangerous-looking character.

Deadwood Dick took a good survey of the toll-taker—a compliment which the man did not return, for he had been able to do that from his place of biding.

And from him Dick's eyes wandered to the

wonderful double-mouthed passage, with its moving door.

"Et aire a hummer, ain't et?" exclaimed Mr. Simm.

If natural, it was little short of the marvelous. Here was a new gorge, and no one could suspect, at a glance, that it had been opened within the minute. But now, that he had seen it done, Dick could note the wear-marks of the moving door upon the rocky floor, and no doubt a careful search would have disclosed the secret to him.

"It is certainly a wonderful affair," he confessed.

"Yas, so et be, an' this hyer ar' what gives ther town below thar the name et bears."

"This, then, is Danger Divide, eh?"

"So et ar' called."

"It is well named. Just move that rock half way, till I have a look at it, will you?"

"Why, cert; anything ter be obligin'; with ther prospect of that other fiver you mentioned."

"You shall have them both," Dick promised.

"This is worth the money, even if your method of getting it isn't just on the square."

"But, bless yer honest pilgrim heart!" the fellow exclaimed, with his hand on the rock, "et ar' on ther square. This hyer ar' only a leetle joke what we git on pilgrims what wander up this way. Ther mayor of ther town down thar says et ar' all right, ez boyees will be boyees, yer know; an' what ther mayor says, be gum! ar' jest as true as printin'."

"And who is mayor of the town?" asked Dick.

"Yaller Mose, as we calls him."

"Well, go ahead with that unique door, and let me see it work again."

The man with the wandering eye exerted his strength, and the door was pulled half-way back to where it had been at first.

In that position, both wings, or chambers, of the gorge were shown, both very narrow, separated by the sharp, ax-shaped rock that served as a door. If that rock had been hinged, it could not have served the purpose better than it did.

"Wull, what d'ye think on't?" Cross-eyed Simm demanded, when Dick had taken a good look.

"I think it is a wonderful thing, the same as I thought at first," Deadwood Dick responded.

"But, here's your money," he added, "and now let's have some pointers about the town."

"All right. Jest set yer interrogatur ter runnin', an' I'll chip in answers as prompt as circumstances will allow."

"All right it is, then. But, by the way, I suppose you reap quite a harvest at this tollgate, don't you?"

"Wull, yes an' no, both. Sometimes we gits a soft thing, like you f'instance, but more times we don't. Most fellers is strapped, so they don't pan big. Why, out of four what kem along yesterday, only one was worth stoppin', an' he only turned out a dollar. We takes turns, ye see, an' it ain't often that we gits a snap like you."

CHAPTER III.

DICK IS STRANGELY WARNED.

BRISTOL considered it not a bad investment. He had gained a point of information that was worth the money paid out.

That point of information was, that the four men with whom he was to work upon the case in hand, had arrived.

Of course it was pretty safe to conclude that these four men were the emissaries of the governor. Their number, four, and the time of their arrival, naturally led to that conclusion.

While the two were talking, they had moved to the edge of the plateau, and now looked down upon the town.

"What is that largest building there?" asked Dick, pointing.

"Thet aire one what runs back nigh to ther creek?" questioned Mr. Simm.

"Yes, that is the one I mean."

"Thet aire ar' ther hotel. Et ar' called ther Pilgrim's Repose."

"And who owns this Pilgrim's Repose?"

"Wull, Yaller Mose owns et, I reckon, an' in fact I know he do; but et ar' run by a feller we calls Honey Hime, which name ar' short fer Hiram Honeybird."

"Hiram Honeybird, eh? Well, that is a sweet name! And what manner of man is this same Honey Hime?"

"Wull, he ar' sort o' twixt and atween; not r'ale good nur yet very bad. He measures about six feet two, from ther ground, an' has red ha'r."

"Then, I take it, he is the bad man of the place."

"Bless ye, no. Thar is one other that kin top him."

"And who is that?"

"Yaller Mose."

"Hal! then your worthy mayor is the king-bee?"

"Thet's what he ar'. Why, be kin wollop any two men ye kin put up ag'in' him, an' not try very hard, nuther. Oh! he's jest a terror, he ar', an' that's what I'm tellin' ye."

"A good fellow to be on friendly terms with, then, I should say. I must try to get on the right side of him. By the way, never heard of a fellow here that sometimes calls himself 'the Devil,' did you?"

Cross-eyed Simm looked puzzled.

"No; I don't reckon I hev," he answered, slowly.

"Well, no matter. I thought it might be your mayor. I heard some fellows mention that name, and as you give your mayor such a strong recommendation, I thought he might fill the bill; that's all."

"No, never heerd of him; but, if thar happens ter be a fight, an' Yaller Mose takes a hand in, then he's ther very Old Imp hisself—horns, hoofs, tail an' all."

"He must be a bad one. Well, what more can you tell me about this lively little town?"

"Wull, I dunno; et ar' 'cordin' ter what ye want ter know. We has a dozen or so of cheap saloons, whar ye kin git ther p'izenest benzine thet ever burnt holes in a human stummick, an' only a quarter a drink; an' we has a post-office; an' we has a stage two times a week. Et don't come by this hyer trail, though."

"I should think not."

"Jess so. No, et comes from up north way, an' comes inter the pocket along thet aire canyon ye see over thar."

"Where the creek disappears?"

"Prezackly. Yas, we has a stage; an'—an'—Oh! we has lots of 'tractions, 'most too numerous ter mention, but which you kin soon diskiver when oncet ye git thar; an' then—Yas, durn et, we has a ghost, too!"

"A ghost, do you say?"

"Thet's what I jest do say; a real live ghost, or a real dead one, whichever way ye wants ter take et, an' no discountin' that fact."

"Well, now, a ghost is quite an acquisition for a growing town," commented Dick. "What sort of a spook is it? Is it an orderly, well-behaved ghost?"

"Wull, yes, et ar' pritty muchly thet way, I reckon. Et ar' a ghost of ther shemal's suasion, we takes et, but nobody has got a good close squint at et yet. Et ar' rather wary, an' most genly keeps off at long range."

"You interest me," declared Dick. "Tell me all about this wonderful spirit that you speak of. If there is one kind of story that I like better than another, it is a genuine ghost-story."

"Et ar' ther same wi' me," the cross-eyed toll-gatherer declared. "I ain't so pertickler about seein' 'em, though. I'd rather leave thet fer somebody else."

"I don't blame you there, but let's hear more about this one."

"Jess so. Wull, et hev been seen quite a number o' times, an' oncet I got a glimpse of et meself, at long range. Et ar' a figger in white, not much fer bigness, but a tall hustler on ther run, I tell yer! Et wur a-goin' lickety-split, when I seen et, headin' straight fer ther canyon over thar, an' when et got thar, blame me ef et didn't up an' jump right off!"

"What, jumped off into the canyon?"

"Prezactly."

"And didn't you go down there to see if anything could be found?"

"Why, bless yer innercent pilgrim heart, thar's no bottom to ther pesky hole. Thar's no way of gettin' down thar."

"No bottom to it? No way of getting down? Well, this grows interesting. I should think you enterprising citizens would want to investigate. How do you know there is no bottom?"

"'Cause we've pitched stones down thar, an' nary a sound hev come back ter prove thet they found bottom."

"Well, it is certainly peculiar. Is it so all the way along the canyon?"

"Wull, no, et ar' only right under thet aire big tree ye see over thar on ther edge of ther hole. In other places a stone will hit rock, after goin' a big ways down, but thar's no bottom under ther tree."

"And has this ghost been seen since that time?"

"Why, bless yer, yes. An' every time et ar' seen, 'most, et runs fer ther canyon an' jumps off, jest like et war doin' et fer fun. We calls ther place Ha'nted Canyon, an' thet aire hole we calls ther trail to ther Evil One's headquarters."

"It would be strange if it had not obtained such a name. But, about this ghost: do you believe it is a genuine spirit?"

"In course et aire! No critter of meat an' blood could jump inter thet aire canyon, an' come out alive ter do et again, be gum!"

"It certainly doesn't look so, but there are a good many strange things in this world of ours. Seeing is not always believing."

"What, yer don't mean ter say thet you don't believe et ar' a speeret, do ye?"

"I am no believer in ghosts, Mr. Simm. I never saw one yet that didn't turn out to be made up of flesh and blood."

"Wull, yer has never seen this one. When ye do, I opine ye wull agree with ther rest of us thet et aire spooky enough to be nothin' but jest a shadder."

"We shall see. By the way, I take this to be a mining town."

"Et aire."

"Where are the mines?"

"Ther' ain't but one, besides ther placers, an' thet one aire jest around hyer by ther falls. Yer can't see et from hyer. We'll see et as we go down."

"Does your mayor own that?"

"No, thet ar' owned by Mentor Ogdens."

"And who is he? I mean, what manner of man?"

"Wull, a man of forty, should say; plenty of ther kerdoodleum, an' gall enough fer a ox."

"Not liked very well, eh?"

"I didn't say so er tall. I don't gamble heavy on him, though. I used ter work fer him."

"Does he manage the mine himself?"

"Yes; but he has a super, too, a feller named Basil Condon."

"A young man?"

"Man of about your years, I should jedge."

"What is his standing in the eyes of the citizens at large?"

"Wull, he ar' pritty muchly liked, I guess. I like him a durn sight better nor what I do Ogdens."

"Are they both married men?"

"Don't know as either one of 'em is; an', fer thet matter, I don't know thet they ain't. Don't know nothin' about et, only thet they hain't got no wives hyar."

"Well, anything else of interest you can tell me?"

"Et seems ter hit me thet you is askin' a good many questions."

"Well, I paid for the privilege, didn't I?" demanded Dick, smiling.

"So yer did, that's sure. It hed slipped my mind, an' thet's as true as printin'." And his hand dived into a pocket, to make sure that the two coins were safe. "Beg yer parding. Go on with yer inquest, be gum!"

"Are there any other points of interest about the town, that would prove good for a stranger to know?"

"I opine thet ther' is, but I can't think of 'em jest now. You'll pick 'em up when ye gits thar. Anything furdur thet ye wants ter ask?"

"No, I guess not. Perhaps I have got the worth of my money, so we'll jog along; that is, if you are going down that way. How about that?"

"An' thet aire same ar' what I means ter do," the man with the disjointed eyes announced.

"Well, come along then," invited Dick, "and I'll let you act as my guide, if you will do so."

Dick turned back to his horse.

"Thet same I'll do," said Mr. Simm, promptly, "though et ain't prezackly necessary, fer ther trail ar' as straight as a string."

The detective laid his hand on the horse's withers, and was about to vault into the saddle, when something caught his eye—something that caused him to start.

On the horn of the saddle, and held there by a pin, was a folded piece of white paper. How it had come there was a mystery, for it certainly was not there when he dismounted.

Dick cast a glance at Simm, to see if he had seen it, but there was nothing about the fellow to indicate that he had. He was talking about the trail down to the town, and was walking toward the open passage.

So Dick sprang into the saddle, and followed after, saying nothing about the paper, but he had secured it, and as soon as chance offered, he opened it. It was a note in pencil, and read as follows:

"TO DEADWOOD DICK:—

"Beware of Danger Divide! If you go there, you go to meet your death. Take warning, and keep away. It means death, swift, horrible. This is no idle warning. If you value your life, keep away."

"WIZARD OF THE CANYON."

CHAPTER IV.

DICK'S ADVENT IN THE DIVIDE.

BRISTOL was puzzled—not only puzzled, but displeased, for this note proved that some one here knew him—a fact that he did not like in the least.

Still, it was not so bad as it might be, since that person seemed to have a friendly interest in him, if the note expressed honest sentiment.

Dick arrived at the conclusion that the note was in a woman's hand, as a certain boldness in the writing seemed to be strained. And the fact that it had been secured to the saddle-horn with a pin, lent support to that theory.

He thrust it into a pocket, and was about to address his guide, when that worthy suddenly stopped and faced about.

"This hyer won't do, be gum!" he exclaimed.

"What's that that won't do?" asked Dick.

"Why, I didn't shet ther stone door as et war afore. Next pilgrim as comes erlong ther trail wull think he hev come to ther eend of ther road, sure; an', none of ther boyees kin take his toll."

While saying this, the fellow started to walk back toward the plateau, and Deadwood Dick kept an eye upon him carefully; he did not mean to allow him a chance for any treachery.

But the toll-taker did not mean any. He went back to the end of the passage, and, laying hold upon an iron pin that some of the citizens of the town below had put into the stone door, for that purpose, pulled the door shut, and returned.

Now the end of the passage was closed, and any one coming up that way, and unacquainted with the secret, might be puzzled pretty badly.

"Now et ar' all right," the cross-eyed individual remarked, "an' ef you're ready we'll amble erlong."

"Let's have just a word between ourselves before we go any further," suggested the lone traveler.

The fellow looked up quickly; something in the tone commanding him to do so; and great was his surprise to find that he was covered by one of the horseman's big five-shooters.

"Jimminy whizz!" he exclaimed, "what d'yer mean ter do?"

"Put up your hands," ordered Dick.

Up they went with decided promptness.

"I—I hopes yer don't mean shoot," the fellow gasped.

"I hope not, too," observed Dick, with an uncomfortable suggestive tone. "It will depend on you. Are you dealing on the square with me?"

"Why—I— Yes, ter be sure I ar'."

"I'm a lone traveler and a stranger here," continued Dick, "but I am not a tenderfoot altogether, and you don't want to take me for one."

"What is yer drivin' at, anyhow?" the fellow demanded. "Is yer goin' ter took back yer two fivers?"

"No, you're welcome to them, but I want to know *who your companion was*."

"Me kernpanyun!" in genuine surprise.

"That's what I said."

"Ther' was no one with me, be gum!"

Dick could see that he was candid enough in what he said. His surprise was too real to be called into question.

Yet, as though still in doubt, he demanded:

"Do you give that out for the truth, my man?"

"Thet's what I do, an' straight truth et ar', too."

"Well, I suppose I shall have to take your word for it."

"I opine ye will, be gum! But, why do ye ask ef thar wur anybody with me? Durn me ef I kin see ther pint."

"It looked as though you might have wanted to speak to some one, the reason you forgot to set the stone door back the way it was, so you could return to attend to it, that's all."

Dick had gained his point. He knew that this fellow was as unaware as he had been himself that any one had approached the horse while they were looking down at the town below.

"Jimminy whizz! but you ar' some suspicious, you ar'!" the fellow exclaimed. "Why, bless yer honest pilgrim heart, hadn't any sich thought in my head er tall. No, sir-ee, I worked this hyer leetle riddle all alone, I did, an' I stand ready ter swar to et, ef my word ain't ter be relied on."

Deadwood Dick put his revolver back in his belt, and smiled.

"Well, we'll say no more about it," he said.

"Don't be foolish enough to try any funny-work on with me, though, for I have cut my eye-teeth, you bet."

"Yas, I reckon yer has, too. But, don't be

oneasy, fer I haven't ther least idee o' dealin' ye a hand from a cold deck; nary."

"Very well, we'll call it square, then. Lead on."

"Jess so. In half an hour we'll be thar."

So they moved on, and in a little time came out of the narrow passage into the broad light, upon a trail that lay like a shelf along the rocky wall of the inclosing mountain.

Here the plateau was out of sight, and another vista met the eyes. Just a little further on was the falling water that Dick had heard from the plateau, and the trail passed directly behind it. And down below was the mine that Cross-eyed Simm had spoken of.

The town could be seen, too, of course, and the trail could be followed with the eye most of the way to where it reached the bottom of the gulch, at a point not far from the bridge mentioned.

"Don't this hyer jest yank ther bun fer beeyautiful?" cried the cross-eyed guide, as he waved his hand with a sweep that took in the whole view.

"If you mean the scene," responded Dick, "it is certainly grand. It would take first prize or none, if it could be painted true to Nature."

"Yas, I opine et would, too."

So they talked as they went along, and they passed under the waterfall, went on around and down, finally reaching the gulch bottom, where they crossed the bridge and entered the town.

By this time it was beginning to grow dusky, with the first shades of coming night, and lamps were being lighted.

As soon as they were at their destination, Dick proceeded to cut loose from the fellow who had been his companion on the way down from the plateau.

"Well, here we are, Mr. Simm," he observed. "I don't suppose you have any further use for my company, so I'll let you go and enjoy the ten dollars I gave you. I will go it alone, now, too."

"Jess so," Cross-eyed Simm returned. "Wull, ef I kin be of any use ter you, jest let me know, an' I'm yourn ter command—fer boodle."

"All right, I'll bear your offer in mind. I'm going to the Pilgrim's Repose to see whether that place merits its name."

"An' et do, be gum, as I kin surtyfy!" the fellow exclaimed. "Which is ter say," he added, "I kin surtyfy to ther merit of ther pizen thet Honey Hime serves out ther thirsty pilgrims what drops in to sample his wares. I'm goin' thet way meself, after awhile."

So they parted, and Dick rode on to the open door of the hotel in question, and looked in.

"Hillo!" he called out, to draw attention.

"Hillo et ar'!" responded a voice, and a man appeared immediately.

"Any room fer a lodger in thar?" Dick demanded, dropping into a broader dialect than he had been using.

The man at the door turned around to speak to some one else, and a tall man with red hair and a decidedly homely face soon came to the front.

"What is et you want?" he asked.

"I want lodgins fer myself and hoss," Dick explained. "I ain't so p'ticuler about myself, but I want me hoss ter have the best you kin give him."

"Wull, we kin fix yer out, I reckon," Mr. Honeybird, for he it was, allowed. "Thet aire ar' what we do business hyer fer, an' ef you have got ther necessary about yer clothes, we'll give ye ther best we've got."

"And I've got ther collateral," Dick averred, "so I reckon et's a dicker, an' all parties satisfied. Send out your man to take charge of ther critter, and I'll amble in."

A fellow appeared at once for that purpose, and when Dick had slapped a coin into his hand, telling him to give the horse the best of care, he went into the "hotel."

Dick's little dialogue with the landlord had not been without its object.

The detective knew that it would draw attention, and that every eye would be upon him when he entered.

And so it was. Everybody was looking as he stepped within, and if any persons were on hand who had an interest in the white cross which Dick wore on the left lapel of his coat, there could be no excuse for their not seeing it.

About the usual crowd was there, but as the hour was early, the crowd was small.

Dick ran his eyes over those present, and advanced to the bar.

The landlord had returned to the place behind it.

"Trot out your album o' su'ographs," Dick requested, "an' I'll jot my name down fer ye in short meter."

"Hyer et ar," responded the landlord, and he showed a greasy-looking book across the boards, following it up with pen and ink.

Dick took up the pen, and as soon as he could induce the ink to "take" on the dirty page, inscribed as follows:

"JOHN JAYN,

"Up-range John,"

"From up the Range."

"There ye have et," he exclaimed, as soon as he had done writing, and he gave the book a twist that brought it right end up in front of the proprietor.

Honey Hime looked at what had been penned, and inquired:

"Whar is et you ar' frum?"

"From up ther range," Dick answered.

"Yas, I know; I kin onderstand that; but from what place?"

"From no place at all," persisted Dick. "I'm jst from ther range, an' that's all ther is about et. Ef et don't suit, why say so, and I'll amble off to other quarters. Ef ar' money thet talks, an' ef you feel afraid thet ye won't get ther good, why hyer et ar' in advance."

With that he slapped some gold coin down on the bar and turned away, while Honey Hime grumbled something about some folks' being too snappy, and while the crowd pressed forward to learn what the stranger's name could be, and the reason for the outbreak of words concerning the place he hailed from. And in the crowd Deadwood Dick noticed at least two who had lost the middle button from their coats, with a nail doing duty in lieu thereof. And with these two he exchanged glances of recognition, though he had never seen either of them before.

CHAPTER V.

CHALLENGED TO WRESTLE.

THIS "Up-range John" had the air of about as cool a man as had ever made advent into Danger Divide.

The way he had "snapped up" the big proprietor of the Pilgrim's Repose, was astonishing to many, for Honey Hime was a man of known prowess, even though he did rank second to Yaller Mose, and his huge size generally won for him the respect for strangers, and made them a little wary of him.

But there had been no respect shown for his giant proportions in this instance, not even a little bit. This young and independent pilgrim had talked "sass" to him, right from the shoulder, and hadn't been noticed to tremble in his boots, either. But there was something else that had been noticed, by some, and that was the dark look that came upon Honey Hime's face, as Deadwood Dick turned away from the bar. It boded ill for this Richard of ours.

The proprietor "raked in" the coins nevertheless, and "chalked up" the amount against the name Dick had registered, and then flung the book around so that the curious ones might read and be satisfied.

Deadwood Dick was complacently looking over the assembled citizens, to see if any of them showed any interest in the signal he displayed on his coat lapel, but so far as he could note, none of them did.

He noticed that the two detectives had their eyes upon him, though, ready to take note of everything, and he wondered where the other pair could be, but did not doubt that they would materialize promptly enough, if needed at any time.

The first man to read the name on the register, after the landlord shoved the book around, was about the "bummiest" specimen of humanity that can be imagined.

His hat was a ragged wreck, his clothes were tattered remnants of what had been, and his boots were down at the heels and gaping at the toes. He was dirty, and his scraggy hair and beard were so matted that his head looked like a mop. His eyes were small, and looked like two holes burnt in a blanket.

Said this poor apology for a scarecrow:

"Do these hyer old eyes o' mine read aright? What ar' this hyer thet I see spread out afore me? Kin et be true? Ar' it indeed Up-range John? or ar' et caused by ther onseemly squirming o' snakes in me boots? Yas, et ar', et ar'! Oh! but this hyer ar' like a jugful o' ther elixer o' life to me shattered system, et ar'! Me youth ar' renewed, an' I feel jest like a frisky kangaroo on ther tall jump! Whar be ye, Up-range John, till I feast me f'red eyes to ther full on yer manly form? John, John! Come to ther arms of yourn truly, an' let me weep fer joy on yer buz-zum!"

The crowd laughed, and Deadwood Dick look-

ed at the ragged wretch, who was now making for him with arms outstretched.

And as he looked, Dick made a discovery. The fellow's coat was held together at the middle with a piece of wire.

Here, then, was number three of the governor's advance detectives!

"Hold on," Dick protested, putting up his hand; "don't work yourself into a nervous sweat, my friend, and don't begin to weep on me, as you suggest, till I hev had time to settle in my mind whar I hev seen you afore."

"Whar ye hev seen me!" cried the seeming bummer. "Why, yer hev seen me up ther range, in course! But, et ar' some while ago, an' ef ye hev allowed me ter slip from mind, et ain't ter be wondered at. Ef yer don't know me by sight, though, mebby ye wull know me by name. Don't yer reckyleck James James, better known as Jim-jam Jim, ther galoot what ye saved frum bein' run over by ther stage one night? In course yer do! Put et right thar!"

The dirty-looking individual put out his grimy paw.

Now that he knew him to be one of the governor's men, Dick fell in with his plan.

"So, you are *that* feller, be you?" Dick exclaimed, giving his hand. "You are worse-looking than ever, if possible, and et's no wonder thet I didn't know ye. How do you thrive these days? Pretty bad I should say judgin' by yer attire!"

"Et all depends on ther price o' p'izen," was the response, as the fellow continued to pump Dick's hand. "Ef whisk' ar' high, an' me pile ar' low, then I don't thrive er tall, I simply exist—hang on, ez et war, by ther ragged aige: but ef tangle-leg ar' low an' me credit's good, then I thrive an' wax fat till my clothes wull hardly hold me. Oh! I'm ther same old Jim-jam, you bet!"

With that he let Dick's hand go, and threw back his head and laughed a laugh that was like a steam calliope out of tune.

And the crowd joined in because they had to, it was so ridiculously comical.

When the disguised detective ceased laughing, he turned to the crowd, and with a grand wave of the hand toward Deadwood Dick, said:

"Feller-galoots an' p'izen annihilators, allow me ter interdoose ter yer worthy notice this hyer gentleman from up ther range, Mister Up-range John, who kin run higher, jump faster an' kick further 'an ary other critter what wears boots. You hear me yaup? Sich ar' ther toot o' my bazzoo, an' ef ye don't believe et, jest tread on his corns an' see ef thar won't be a young yarthquake hyerabouts. As fer wrastlin', he kin throw anything from a jackass to a ellyphant, you bet."

Such a speech as this was something of a surprise to Bristol. He did not understand the purpose that called it forth. But he did a little later on.

"Wrastlin'!" cried a voice from the other side of the room. "Did you chirp thet aire word, me ragged swill-bar'l? I am some on ther wrastle meself, I am, an' ef this hyer stranger kin tip me over on me shoulders, I'll stand treat to ther house, be gum!"

"Ef I had ther kerdoodleum, I'd take thet aire offer up so quick et w'd make yer head swim!" cried Jim-jam Jim. "Oh! won't somebody grip on ter the snap, an' see ther fun? Why, Up-range John kin stand him on his beam's-ends so suddint thet he wull forgit what his name wur."

"Yas, somebody jest do et," the challenger cried. "I am growin' rusty fer a good old hip-an'-thigh scrimmage, an' ther remark ye have jest heerd hev set me blood in motion fer a wrastle. Wull yer do et, stranger? I won't hurt ye, not even a little bit, ef ye wull."

The fellow had now come to the front, and looked like a restless, rough-shod miner. He had on a flannel shirt and leather breeches, and a pair of stogies that looked to be sixteens at least.

Dick took a careful survey of him, when he came nearer, and suddenly made a discovery. The fellow's shirt was pinned together in front with a small nail.

Here, then, was the fourth man of the party.

Still, Dick did not see into the purpose of the proposed wrastle, clearly. Knowing that it must have some object, however, he fell in with the scheme and lent it his aid.

"Well, this is rather sudden, citizens," ye remarked. "Yer don't give a feller time ter git the dust of travel off his boots, afore he want to see if he kin hold up his end in a wrastle."

"Yer don't need ther dust off," cried Jim-jam Jim. "Yer kin toss this hyer feller over slick ez grease, an' I know et. Oh! ef only I had ther

money ter put up, I tell yer I'd do et, double soon."

"An' I'm jest ez cornferdent thet yer *can't* do et," put in the other fellow. "Come, stranger, wull yer try et, fer ther drinks fer ther house? I'm jest pinin' fer a go with somebody, an' ther reccommendation thet ther swill-tub hyer hev given ye, makes me long for a go at you. What's yer say?"

"You seem to be in earnest about et," observed Dick.

"In 'arnost! Why, bless yer, stranger, I'm actooly tremblin' wi' eagerness at ther prospeck. Come, don't dissap'int me, but let me take one fall out of ye, ef no more. Come, thar's a good feller; an' I promise ye thet I won't hurt ye."

"Sure ye won't hurt me? Won't jam me down on ther floor so hard thet I'll split a plank, nor nothin' like thet?"

"No, honor bright. I'll let ye down easy, sure."

"Well, then, I'll try you."

A cheer greeted this. Your Western crowd is always ready for anything of this sort.

Drawing back on all sides, the crowd formed a ring, leaving Dick and his challenger within it, facing each other.

Deadwood Dick had made up his mind that he would allow his opponent to throw him the first time, anyhow, to see what it was all about. So, as they stood facing each other, ready, he said:

"Shall we call et the best two out of three?"

"Yas, that suits me," was the reply. "An' if you kin drop me twice," was added, "I'll give ye my name, be gum!"

"An' what might yer name be?" Dick inquired.

"Jake Hyde ar' what et ar', but I'm known fur an' near as Wrastlin' Jacob."

"Well, Wrastlin' Jacob, lay aside yer weep-ins, an' I'll do ther same, an' we shell soon see who is ther best man."

As he spoke, Dick threw off his belt and handed it to Jim-jam Jim, and when Wrestling Jacob had done the same, they were ready for the business in hand.

"Be ye ready?" asked Jacob.

"I am," responded Dick.

"Then peel yer eye an' look out fer me."

Honey Hime was leaning over the bar, resting his jaws in his hands, looking on, and the crowd was now silent, waiting for the sport to begin.

It began at once. The two men met, made a sudden grab for position, and at it they went. Neither seemed to have much advantage, and it was looked upon as a fair test of skill and strength in both.

Dick braced himself to test the other man's strength, and found that he had no mean opponent, but one who could, if he would, make a pretty tough struggle for him.

After that, he prepared to take the fall he had made up his mind to.

In a moment down they went, Dick at the bottom, and both shoulders squarely on the floor.

And the way that Jim-jam Jim did take on then was a caution. He jumped right up and down and scolded roundly, using words enough to fill half a column, if quoted, and making noise enough for a dozen men.

And while he was doing that, the man who had Dick down hastily whispered:

"We are here, and recognize you. Took this plan to speak to you. Nothing to work on yet. We shall keep our eyes on you, and be ready to help you at any time. Who are you?"

"I'm Richard Bristol, Deadwood Dick," was the response.

A look of surprise came into the eyes of the man, and he let Dick up at once. Then the other rounds were taken, Bristol laying his opponent on his back both times, in spite of a desperate resistance in the last effort, much to the delight of Jim-jam.

But, no sooner was it over than a voice cried out:

"Young feller, I'll bet thet I kin lay ye on yer back, three times straight, fer a hundred dollars."

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GULCH.

THE voice came from the direction of the door.

Every eye turned in that direction, to learn who the challenger was.

Deadwood Dick looked with the rest, as he naturally would, being the one addressed.

He saw a large, muscular man, tall and broad of shoulder, and with a skin the color of saffron.

He needed no one to tell him who it was. He guessed at once, and rightly, that this was "Yaller" Mose, the mayor of the town.

"Yaller Mose!" was the exclamation that soon came from a dozen or more of the men in the crowd.

The mayor advanced into the room, then, with his eyes upon Deadwood Dick.

Dick returned the stare.

"Didn't yer hear what I said?" the mayor demanded.

"Yes, I heard what you said," answered Dick, promptly.

"Well, then, why don't you answer?"

"I had'n't got quite ready. Why do you want ter wrastle with me?"

"Ter let ye know that ye ain't cock of ther walk around hyer, that's why. I kem in jest in time ter see you drop this ragged bum twicet, an' ther thought kem ter me that I'd better tame you a leetle, afore ye git it inter yer head that ye are boss of ther burg."

"Well, I'm much obliged for your friendly interest, truly," asserted Dick. "If you set yourself up as best man of the town, you are welcome to wear the laurels. I am not hyer to contest the matter with you or anybody."

"Oh, come now, you can't get out that way," the mayor cried. "I have given you a fair an' square challenge ter hook horns wi' me, an' ef yer don't do et ther only reason will be 'cause yer dassent."

"Well, you hev ther privilege of lookin' at et ther way ef yer wants ter. It don't make any difference to me."

The mayor laughed heartily at this, and declared:

"I've er notion ter made ye fight anyhow—No, I means wrastle. Et wull do me good ter set ye ter spinnin' around on yer left ear like a top, an' it wull be heaps o' fun fer ther boyees."

"And you can't blame me ef I respectfully decline ter serve fer ther amusement of ther crowd in any sich manner ez that," returned Dick.

"Et ain't ez you say erbout thet aire," the mayor warned. "Ef I say wrastle, why wrastle et ar'; an' ef ye won't do et, I kin take ye and stand ye on yer head in ther corner anyhow."

"An' that's what yer'd orter do with him," said Honey Hime.

"What's he been doin'?" demanded Yaller Mose.

"He's most too lippy fer a stranger hyer."

"Thet's so, ar' et? We'll wrastle, then, mister."

"You're going to force ther thing, eh?" said Dick.

"Call et thet ef yer wants ter," returned the mayor.

Yaller Mose now advanced, and nine men out of ten, knowing neither men, would have been willing to bet their last dollar that the mayor could do what he promised!

But, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the proof in the matter of this sort is in the seeing which man goes to the floor the most times in a given number of rounds.

"Very well, then," said Dick, coolly. "If that is your style, why the sooner we settle the thing the better."

"Didn't I tell yer he ar' too lippy?" observed Honey Hime.

"I'll soon take thet aire all out of him," promised the worthy mayor.

"Well, make a beginning, then," Dick invited.

"Wull, dast yer cool imperdence!" exclaimed the mayor. "Hang me ef you ain't altogether too flip with yer talker, me cockalorum. You need trimmin' down mighty bad, an' I'm jest ther man ter do ther job, an' do et right."

With that he stepped forward with a swagger, and made a grab for Dick, catching him in a pretty fair hold.

But he had reckoned without his host, as it were, if he expected to have an easy time of it.

When he felt Bristol's powerful limbs, he probably realized that he had a tough customer to deal with, and when he sampled Dick's strength, then he ought to have been pretty sure that he had.

No time was wasted by the contestants, and that it was a desperate struggle for the mastery was evident to all that deeply interested crowd.

The mayor made a terrible effort, and caught a hold that he felt sure would end the matter, but, just as he was making ready to carry out his purpose, one of Dick's legs somehow twirled around the other way, and in the same instant the mayor was standing squarely upon his head.

A howl greeted that, and the howl was still

greater when Dick flapped him over and laid him out flat upon his back.

But it was not ended. It had only fairly begun, now.

Yaller Mose rolled over and got up with quick fury. He was about the "maddest" man ever seen.

Ripping out a roar, he sprung upon Dick again, this time securing a decidedly advantageous hold, and it looked as though Dick must go down, sure.

But, there was a hitch in that arrangement, for Dick evidently had a way of squirming out of ugly positions that set at defiance every effort made to keep him where he was wanted.

There was a slip, a scuffle, a halt, a terrible strain by both men; then of a sudden up went the yellow-hued mayor, and down he came flat again.

Now the lookers-on cheered wildly, which only served to enrage the mayor the more, if possible, and Honey Hime straightened up as though he felt he ought to go to the assistance of his friend.

When Yaller Mose got up again, he was changed in color to a sort of ghastly green, so thoroughly enraged he was.

"Curse yer!" he screamed, "yer has got that foul holt on me twicet, but yer can't do et ag'in. I'll hug yer this hyer time till I crack every bone in yer body, an' then I'll throw yer over ther moon."

"Well, come on and do it," taunted the detective. "You may as well finish ther job while you are about et. Ef you don't floor me, I'll floor you, an' that's jest as sure as you stand on yer pins now."

"Ef yer do et ag'in, I'll give ye me hat, I sw'ar!" the mayor cried.

"And ef you dump me, I'll give you mine," declared Dick. "Come on."

But this time the mayor was watching to get just the hold that he wanted, and did not spring in so abruptly as he had done before.

But when he did move he "got there." It was done as quick as a flash, and the coveted hold was gained.

And then, almost in the same instant, up went Deadwood Dick, right over the mayor's head, and down he came with force.

Everybody looked to see him rendered almost senseless by the crushing fall that threatened him, but in that everybody was disappointed, badly, and no one more so than Yaller Mose himself.

Just as he was bringing Dick down, with the intention of breaking the floor with him if he could, Dick suddenly turned over and landed right on his feet. And then, before the mayor could recover, Dick grabbed him and sent him spinning up in the air, and when he came down, right on his back, he made the windows rattle, and jarred half a dozen bottles off the shelves behind the bar.

And it was some moments before the mayor made a move to get up. He was hurt this time, and the match was ended.

When he finally did get up, he observed:

"Yer has done et, cuss ye! but this hyer thing ain't settled. Yer got ther best o' me by foul tricks, an' yer knows yer did, an' yer has got ter pay fer et, so don't fergit it."

"There was nothing about et," retorted Dick. "Et war jest as fair for you as et war for me. Ef yer want any more, either now or any other time, you know whar ye kin get et. Mebby you won't be so mighty fresh about picking up a stranger, another time. Ef yer tackles me again, I'll jam ye clear through ther wall, so be keerful how ye come foolin' around."

As for the four disguised confederates, they could only look on in silent admiration. Even "Jim-jam Jim" forgot to shout his approval.

Just at this juncture, another personage bounded into the room.

It was Cross-eyed Simm, the fellow who had met Dick on the plateau, and his available eye was fairly bulged out.

"Great Jimminy whizz!" he cried. "Ther ghost, ther ghost! Hustle out o' hyer, you lazy duffers, ef yer wants ter see ther speeret of ther gulch! Come, git er move on yer, fer et ar' ambulatin' around not a long ways from ther canyon. Hillo! Mister Traveler," to Dick, "ef yer wants ter see thet aire spook, now is yer chance."

Already a rush was being made for the door, and Dick, catching his belt of weapons from Jim-jam Jim, and putting it on as he ran, went with the crowd.

By this time daylight had entirely disappeared, but the full moon was high, and there was light enough to see plainly in all directions.

All eyes turned toward the lower end of the

little valley, and in that direction, about halfway between the hotel and the dark shadow of the canyon, was seen a figure that was in truth ghostly.

There was a moment of silence, and then the silence was rudely broken by a yell and a dozen or more pistol-shots, and as one man the crowd set out in the direction of the ghost, on a run, and shooting as they ran.

Dick and the other detectives went along, but none of them fired. They seemed to get no nearer to the fleeing figure than they had been at first, for it was gliding away toward the dismal canyon, and there could have been no possible hope of their overtaking it before it reached there, even had their speed been twice as great.

On they ran, and on ahead of them flitted the figure in white, until it came to the brink of the awful gorge, when, throwing up its arms, it gave a leap and disappeared from sight into the sable depths of what was looked upon as the bottomless pit, by the citizens of the town.

The crowd slackened not their speed until they reached the edge of the gorge, but when they came there, not a sight nor a sound of anything was to be seen or heard.

CHAPTER VII.

A NOCTURNAL ADVENTURE.

DEADWOOD DICK was mystified—utterly so. Here was something he could not understand.

When Cross-eyed Simm told him the story of the ghost, he had discredited all he heard; but, now that he had seen for himself, he had to believe, even though he was unable to comprehend. That the ghost, or whatever it was, had sprung into the canyon, there was no doubting.

"Jimminy whizz!" cried Cross-eyed Simm, "don't et beat ther bottle-legged Dutch! Ef et don't, then I'll sot right down hyer an' chaw off me boot-heels, thet's all."

"Yer needn't do anything of ther sort," spoke up the ragged individual, "Jim-jam Jim." "Et do beat them aire same Dutch what ye mention, an' more; et actooly beats ther old gentleman below. Whar in tarnation kin ther spook hev gone to? Thet's ther question that disturbs ther public peace at present."

"Whar kin et hev gone ter?" repeated the other worthy—Wrestling Jacob. "Et ar' plain enough whar et went to. Et went down thar in ther canyon, an' there's no gettin' around thet aire."

"What's yer think erbout et, Up range John?" demanded one.

"It is plain enough ther spook went down here," answered Dick. "There's nothing funny about that part of et, but ef ther critter is in ther habit of doin' this hyer sort of thing, that's whar ther mystery comes in. Et's a puzzler, an' I give et up, right off. Ef et affords innocent amusement fer ther ghost, then I say let et enjoy itself all it kin, that's all."

This view of the matter seemed to strike the crowd as about right, and as there was nothing else to be done, they walked leisurely back to the hotel.

There Honey Hime and Yaller Mose were found in close conversation, which they brought to an end when the crowd filed in.

The mayor wore an ugly scowl, and the face of the proprietor was dark and forbidding.

"Hyer we be, back ergain," cried Jim-jam Jim, "an' now I git up on my hind legs ter motion thet ther mayor of this hyer burg do ther white thing by askin' ther crowd up ter lubricate at his expense. Who seconds ther motion?"

"It was 'seconded' by a generous howl of approval."

"No, I'll be durned ef I do!" the mayor cried, at first, but a hasty second thought led him to change his mind. He quickly saw that such a course would not raise him any in the eyes of his subjects, as he looked upon the citizens in general to be.

"That is ter say," he quickly amended, "I hadn't orter, fer there was a foul trick o' some sort about et; but ez I'm a man o' honor, an' ye all knows me as sich, I wull set 'em up fer ye this time. Honey, set out yer wares, an' let ther boyees help the'rselves, at my expense."

"Honey" obeyed, and about every man present, except Deadwood Dick, availed himself of the opportunity.

Yaller Mose noticed that Dick did not indulge, and there came a savage look upon his face, as though he thought strongly of forcing the treat upon him, but he evidently thought better of it, for he did not attempt to do so.

After that, quiet reigned, and Deadwood Dick had time to inquire about something to eat.

He was still in time for supper, and when he

had partaken heartily of the meal he returned to the bar-room to enjoy a smoke.

Two of the detectives were there, Jim-jam Jim and another. The other two were absent. These came in later, though, and then the others went out. And this, as Dick rightly guessed, was their scheme to get supper and still not leave him unsupported.

Up to this time his white cross had served no further purpose than to make him known to his detective brigade.

Search the crowd as he would, he could discover no one else who paid any attention to it.

Still, he was aware that he would have to be patient. It was not likely that, in a business of such danger as this, the rascals would show their hands at once. It might require days of waiting before they would attempt to communicate with him.

The evening passed, with no more exciting events than a slight scrimmage or two, in which Honey Hime promptly took a hand and hustled the combatants out of doors; and finally "Up-range John" decided to retire, and made his desire known to the landlord, who had him shown to his room promptly.

Dick took a good look about the room before he disrobed, to see if everything was as it should be, and his search seemed to satisfy him. There were good fastenings to the doors and windows, and every thing looked snug and safe.

He had reasons for this caution. He knew that, wearing the white-cross signal on his coat, he was a marked man, and he had no intention of being taken by surprise if he could help it.

But his precautions availed him nothing, as ensuing events proved.

He retired, with his weapons in a handy place, and being about tired out with his long ride and his extraordinary exertions, he soon slept soundly.

When he awoke it was with a start.

There was light in the room, and around the bed stood four masked men, each with a revolver leveled at him.

Bristol realized immediately that he was trapped, and that he had no chance whatever to resist, so he smilingly observed:

"How d'ye do, gentlemen? Glad to see you. What has won me the honor of this nocturnal invasion?"

"You are soon to learn that," the man nearest his head made answer. "No harm is intended you, but you are warned not to offer resistance. Get up and dress, and follow us."

Knowing that he had no chance to do otherwise than obey, Dick set about complying with the request, and in a little time was dressed and ready to set out. But he had not been allowed to put on his belt of arms.

"Well, I'm ready," he announced.

"And so are we," assured the speaker for the four, "but before we start, I will answer your question, and give you the reasons for our visiting you in this seemingly hostile manner."

Deadwood Dick noted that the man was one who could use good language, and decided that he did not lack in education.

"I shall feel honored if you will enlighten me," Dick made response to that. "I am rather puzzled to account for it, I assure you."

He too, for the moment, had dropped his dialect.

The spokesman of the masked men reached forward his hand and laid a finger on the white cross on the lapel of the detective's coat.

"Do you understand now?" he asked.

"I think I do," Bristol responded.

"Very well, then come with us. This is no place to talk business, but we shall soon be in a place where we can talk freely. You must allow us to blindfold you, for we cannot afford to take any chances you know."

"Do as you please with me," Dick invited, "so long as you hold to your promise not to do me any harm."

"Which we shall do, strictly," was the assurance.

One of the four now stepped up and put a bandage over Dick's eyes, taking good care that he did the work well, and when that was done they were ready to leave the room for the other place spoken of.

Deadwood Dick had been wondering how they had got into his room, for while dressing he had noticed that the doors and windows were secured just as he had left them on retiring. And he had felt sure, then, that there was no other way of entering.

Two of the men now laid hold upon his arms, to guide him, and the others led the way to the furthest corner of the room.

There they stopped for a moment, and then open swung a door.

And, in the way of doors, it was something new. It was one that was likely to defy the most thorough search. It was not hinged in the corner of the room, but was actually a corner of the room in itself, made movable.

It took up, or in, about eighteen inches of the wall each side of the corner angle, and when open, presented a space of about twenty-five inches, plenty of width for all ordinary purposes of a door. The walls, by the way, were of wood, and the door was hardly discoverable even by those who knew the secret.

The door opened outward, upon a small landing, from which a flight of steps descended, and the men in advance stepped out and down, the others, with Deadwood Dick in charge, following.

The door was not closed after them, but left open, evidently for convenience when they should return.

The flight of stairs was a long one, and Dick began to wonder whether the end would ever be reached. But finally it was, and the dampness of the air told him that the stairs had taken him straight from the second floor to the cellar.

A stop was made there for a moment, and then he was led forward into what seemed to be a narrow tunnel.

This tunnel sloped downward, rather sharply, for a long way, and then it took an upward turn, which it held until finally it came out into the open air.

Deadwood Dick had calculated the distance he had come, so far, and set it down as little short of half a mile. And judging by the length of the ascending portion of the tunnel, or passage, he knew that he must be some distance above the town.

Here horses were waiting, and when the detective had been assisted to a mount, the party continued on their way, Dick's horse being led.

It was an hour's ride, and when a halt was called Dick was told that he might remove the bandage from over his eyes. That privilege he immediately took advantage of, and found himself in a large cavern, with the four masked men near him, still mounted.

Two of the men had torches in hand, these affording light enough to answer all present purposes.

"Now, sir," said the spokesman, "we take it that you are from Governor Woodlow, and that your business concerns his missing grandson."

"You are right," assured Bristol. "Have you brought with you the twenty thousand dollars demanded?"

"No, I have not. The governor will not send it until he knows positively the boy is safe and sound. I must see the boy and report to the governor."

"Well, I don't know but that is all right. It shows sound precaution, anyhow. But, will you know the boy if you do see him? Have you ever seen the little fellow? If not, how can you identify him?"

"The governor showed me a picture of him, recently taken, and I can readily tell whether you show me the right child or not."

"Good enough. I will bring the boy here."

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK SEES THE BOY.

WITH that, he who was head of the band rode away into the further depths of the cavern. The other three remained near the detective prince, with drawn revolvers, so that he could neither escape if he wanted to, nor follow him who had gone to bring the boy.

The man soon rode out of sight around a bend in the cavern, and presently the click of his horse's hoofs on the stone floor died away in the distance, and all was silence unbroken.

Neither of the four who waited exchanged any words, until presently the click of hoofs was heard again, telling of the leader's return.

"I guess he's on his way back," observed Dick, then.

"Yas, he's comin'," one of the three assented, and that was all.

In a few minutes the horseman appeared in sight, and when he came near, Dick saw that he had a boy perched in front of him on the saddle.

And it needed but one searching glance, when he was brought near enough, to prove to the detective that this was truly the governor's missing grandson, the boy for whom a handsome reward was posted, and for whose ransom these rascals demanded twenty thousand dollars.

"Well, here's the kid," the man observed, when he drew rein. "Do you recognize him?"

"Yes, I have no doubt about his being the one," Dick responded.

"Do you want any further proof than the evidence of your eyes?"

"What other proof have you to offer?"

"Well, you are at liberty to question him, if you will."

The boy, a handsome little fellow, with long, curling hair, was looking from one to the other in a frightened way.

How Dick wished for his weapons then! He was dare-devil enough, and would have risked a fight for the boy, even with such odds against him! He had pitted himself against greater odds, in his day.

But he was disarmed, and the wish went for naught. To attempt such a thing, was to invite certain death.

"There is one other point of proof, which perhaps you are not aware of," he remarked.

"And what is that?" was the eager inquiry.

"The governor's grandson has a small scar on the back of his neck."

"We'll soon settle the question of identity, then. Turn around here, sonny, and let's examine your little neck."

He turned the little fellow around, and one of the men holding a torch near, an examination was made.

Yes, there was a scar, just as it had been described to Dick by Governor Woodlow.

"Satisfied?" queried the man.

"Perfectly satisfied," Dick answered.

"Very well. Now the question is: What is going to be done?"

"Well," said Bristol, "one thing that must be done is, you must take good care of the boy, so that when he is redeemed he will be well and sound in body."

"Oh, we'll do that, never fear. He shall have the best of care that circumstances will allow."

"Good enough. I will communicate with the governor, tell him that the lad is alive and well, and tell him to send on the money."

"How will he send it?"

"In a way by which it will reach me in safety, I assure you."

"You have some idea, then, that we would steal the money and still keep the boy, eh?"

"We are not going to trust you, that is sure."

"Well, we do not ask it. Give us the money, and the boy shall be yours."

"It shall be done. I may write to the governor, or go to him in person, I am not sure which yet. But, when I am ready to conclude the business, how shall I communicate with you?"

Here was just where Dick hoped to gain a point, but he was baffled. These men did not mean to leave a single hole uncovered in the game.

"You can take off the white cross," was the plan suggested, "and do not put it on again till you are ready for the business. Then we will come to you, but not in the same place and manner as on this occasion."

"Well, that satisfies me. We cannot ask anything fairer. All we want is to get possession of the boy."

"Then the governor really intends to come down, eh?"

"Why, to be sure, and the sooner the better."

This was a direct misstatement, of course, but under such circumstances was it not "business?" Dick must allay the suspicions of these men, so that he could the sooner gain advantage over them.

"Well, that is all for the present, then," remarked the leader of the band. "I will take the boy back, and rejoin you in a few minutes, when you will be escorted to your room at the hotel."

With that he turned his horse and went back into the depths of the cavern, as before, returning in about the same length of time as on the other occasion.

But, when he rejoined the party, this time, there was a change in his manner toward the prisoner, for he came with a drawn revolver, and covering Dick, ordered his men to seize and bind him.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded the detective.

"It means that we are going to take no chances," was the answer. "We are going to search you, and if there is anything about you that leads us to suspect you are a detective, instead of a simple messenger, it will be the worse for you."

"Oh, if that is all, go ahead," Bristol invited, promptly. "You are welcome to all the evidence you discover. I a detective; well, now, that is rich!"

His credentials being in the collar of his coat, where only the most minute search could discover them, he felt safe.

He had forgotten, for the time, about the note that he had found pinned to his saddle, on the plateau.

That note was still in one of the outside pockets of his coat, where he had then thrust it.

The detective had slipped out of the saddle, when invited to do so, and was immediately bound.

And, that was not all. A damp cloth was pressed over his face, and he was soon rendered insensible!

"There! Now we can take our time about it," remarked the leader. "Go through his pockets, boys, and see what he carries."

The order was obeyed, promptly, and Dick's effects brought to light. He was found to possess considerable money, a knife, some keys, and a few other things too insignificant to mention. But not a scrap of writing was to be found—that is, not at first, but when the hands of the searchers got around to the outside pockets of his coat where nothing was looked for anyhow, there was found the damning evidence of the note of warning.

"Ha! what is that?" exclaimed the leader, as he saw the note brought forth.

It was handed to him, and he opened and read it.

"Curses on the fellow!" he cried.

"What ar' et?" asked the others.

"This fellow is Deadwood Dick, the famous detective."

"Ther doose he ar'!" and the hands of the three fell upon their knives, as if ready to fall upon the helpless man at the least sign from their leader.

"Yes, he it is, undoubtedly," that worthy assured, "but we won't cut his career short yet. We'll take him back to the hotel, and to-morrow will see him end his days in the way he deserves."

"And how wull that be?"

"At the end of a rope. But, no time to explain now. The governor will be notified that he had better try again, and that if there is any more fooling about it, the boy will be the one to suffer."

With that he motioned the men to lift Dick up and place him on the horse he had been riding, and when Dick had been secured there, they set out upon their return.

Dick had been blindfolded again, so if he came to he would be unable to know anything about the direction he was being taken.

He did come to, presently, but as soon as his thoughts came to him he resolved to "play off," in order to hear whatever might be said by his captors. But nothing was said, and they rode on in silence.

The same route was taken, the one by which they had come, and in due course of time Deadwood Dick found himself back again in his room. And there the bandage was removed from over his eyes, and his hands were freed.

He looked around, to discover the door, but nothing of it was to be seen, and he was puzzled.

"You need not look for that door," the head of the band remarked. "You will not find it. Come, undress and get back to bed, and we will bid you good-night. Oh, I have no doubt it is gall and wormwood to you, but you can't help yourself, so you had better obey."

Dick realized only too well that this was true, so he laid off his clothes and got back into the bed.

His weapons had been kept carefully beyond his reach.

"Now," said the rascal chief, "let me say a few words into your ear. If you think we do not know you, Deadwood Dick, you are mistaken. That little note in your pocket gave you away badly. Ha! I see you had forgotten that. Well, it served us a good turn, anyhow. The deal with you is off. We shall go to the governor again, from another direction. When you awake to-morrow, we shall be miles from here, and out of your reach. Your game did not work."

"If you know what you are talking about it is more than I do," declared Dick.

The man looked at him in a hesitating way.

"Then how came you by that note?" he demanded.

"I found it and put it in my pocket."

"Is that the truth?"

"Of course it is."

There was a pause.

"Well, I'd like to believe you, but there is a suspicion that your words can't wipe out, and we'll have to give ourselves the benefit of the

doubt and drop you. We will now put you to sleep, and bid you good-night."

With that, the fellow made a motion, and two of his men threw themselves upon Dick, holding the damp cloth to his face as before, and he was soon again unconscious. Then they left him, filing out of the room by the secret door, which they closed after them.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK ON THE DEFENSIVE.

BRISTOL slept till morning, and when he awoke the sun was looking into his room.

He sprung up at once, as the recollection of the events of the night came to mind, and wondered whether it had not been a dream.

But he was soon assured on that head, for on the floor lay the cords with which he had been bound, and the bandage that had been used to blindfold him. No, it had been no dream, but a grim reality.

His first business was to dress, and then to buckle on his belt of arms, making sure that his weapons were in good condition.

"Now," he observed to himself, "for business."

He looked around the room, carefully. He wanted to find some trace of that secret door, if possible.

"It is a clever bit of work," he mused, "but I shall find it. Let me see, I had to take just seven paces from this spot, when they led me out, before I came to the door. It is a small room to take seven paces in, that's sure."

He measured the distance to the furthest wall, by paces. There were just five of them, no more and no less.

"It is certain that it was not that way," he decided. "Now, which way was it? The longest distance is to that corner. I will try that."

He returned to his starting-point and tried again, and this time with just the success he looked for. It was just seven paces from that spot to the corner of the room.

"Ha! one point gained!" he exclaimed. "That door is in this corner. Now the next step is to find it. These fellows were not smart, or they would have drugged me before they took me from the room. They have given me the information of a secret passage from this house to the mountains."

He examined the walls carefully to find the marks of the door, but without success. He did find a crack that looked suspicious, however, but considered it too near the corner to be wide enough to serve the purpose of a door.

It was the door itself, nevertheless, and had he been allowed a little more time he might have solved the mystery; but just then heavy steps and many of them were heard in the hall, accompanied by angry voices, and then came a loud rap at the door.

"Hillo!" Bristol called out, "who is thar?"

"Et's me, ther landlord," was the response. "Open this hyer door, an' durn soon, or we'll bu'st et down."

"Oh, I'll open et," said Dick, cheerfully, "so don't go to any rash measures. Why, what is ther trouble, citizens?" as he threw the door open and beheld the dark visages of half a score of men in the hall.

The landlord had a revolver in hand, but before he could bring it to bear, Dick had whipped out both of his, and had the crowd covered.

"Go a leetle easy, gentlemen, go a leetle easy," he cautioned. "I see some of you have your poppers in hand, and as that looks like serious business, you can't blame me ef I meet you half way. What is the rumpus, anyhow?"

"You knows durn well what et ar'," cried Honey Hime.

"No, I don't know anything of the sort," retorted Dick. "You will have to enlighten me."

Running his eyes over the crowd, he beheld two of his fellow detectives, both with weapons in hand.

"Wull," cried the landlord, "et means thet ther bank down-stairs hev been robbed, an' thet you ar' ther robber."

Dick laughed lightly.

"Well, now, that is a good one," he declared.

"What proof have you got against me?"

"We found yer hat right by ther safe door, that's what."

Dick had not yet missed his hat, for he had not had occasion to put it on. He cast a swift glance to the place where he had left it, and it was gone.

"Yas, an' hyer et ar'," chimed in another voice.

The hat was held up to sight.

"An' with this hyer proof ag'in' yer, we hev

come up ter search yer room, so as ter git ther deadwood on yer, ef so be ye ar' ther robber," said the landlord.

"Well, you're welcome to search," Dick declared, boldly, though he felt something in the air that told him of danger. "Step right in and look around, and you are welcome ter all ye find."

He took a step back out of the way, and the accusing party filed in.

The landlord and one or two others began to nose around, but it looked as if they would hunt in vain. Nothing was brought to light.

"Well, are you satisfied?" Dick presently demanded.

"No, we ain't," Honey Hime snapped. "Yer hasn't told us how yer hat kem ter be down thar by ther safe door."

"No, nor can I tell you, either," answered Bristol, "unless some one entered my room in the night and carried it down there."

At this suggestion the landlord laughed.

"How could anybody git in yer room, with ther doors locked?" he demanded.

"In the same manner that four masked men did get in, some time in the night," was the retort.

"What! four masked men got inter yer room! Oh, come, thet aire ar' onpossible ter be. Yer is puttin' et on too thick this spread, sure."

"Et's ther truth, though, none the less," Dick maintained.

"I don't believe et, an' thet's flat," cried Hime.

"Well, I don't care whether you do or not."

"What did the men want?"

"Find out!" Dick answered spitefully. He did not like the appearance of this matter. He had the idea that Hime himself had been one of the masked men. One had been a tall fellow, and the clothes he wore were very like those of the landlord.

"We ar' tryin' ter find out somethin', thet's so," the landlord grated, significantly.

He continued nosing around, as did some of the others, but when they had looked in nearly every place that could be thought of, seemingly, and found nothing, Dick laughingly asked them what they were going to do about it.

"We ar' goin' ter rest ye an' try ye, thet's one thing thet we ar' goin' ter do," answered Hime. "We wants ter know how yer hat kem down thar."

"Let's know a little more about this matter," said Dick. "How much was taken from this safe you speak of, and what did it consist of?"

"Wull, yer see," Hime explained, "ther mayor kept a sort of local bank hyer in ther town, an' his safe wur down under my bar. A good many of ther boyees had deposits in et, consistin' of dust an' nuggets, an' ther mayor an' me had a good deal in ther good, but now et ar' all gone, an' what we wants ter know is, how your hat kem thar."

"And I tell you I give it up," cried Dick. "It begins to look to me like a put-up job, though I can't yet see the object of it."

"We wants our kerdoodleum back, thet ar' all we wants," shouted some of the crowd.

Cried one man:

"Yer hasn't looked in ther bed, landlord."

"That's so, be gum!" Honey exclaimed, and he "went for" the bed forthwith.

He snatched off the covers, and lifted the top mattress, and then he gave vent to an exclamation.

"Hyet ar'!" he cried. "Hyet ar', boyees, sure ez ye live! Some of et ar', anyhow, an' what is to be done with ther cuss?"

"Hang him! Hang him!"

Such were the angry cries from every side.

The two detectives moved a little nearer to their leader, and though they seemed to be against him, with the rest, he knew that he could depend on them.

The landlord had now dragged the top mattress to the floor, and there on the other lay quite a sum of money, and some small pouches of dust and nuggets.

"What more proof d'ye want?" Honey Hime demanded.

"None!"

"Then who says string him up?"

There was a wild shout for hanging, and the crowd made a move forward.

But Bristol still had them covered, and a word of command for them to halt, brought them to a stand.

"Gentlemen," Dick then said, "I am innocent of this business. I know no more about it than a babe unborn. I do know, though, that there is a secret way of getting into this room, and that four masked men visited me last night,

just as I have told you. But of course you will not believe me, so all I ask is a fair trial, before twelve good men."

"Which yer won't git!" was the shout.

"Nary! Up with ther cuss!"

"Hold your mules, gentlemen," said Dick coolly. "You don't generally skin your rabbit till you have caught it. I don't propose to put myself into your hands unless you assure me of a fair trial."

"Yas, yas, thet aire ar' no more nor square," here put in the ragged bumner, as he seemed, Jim-jam Jim. "I moves fer a fair trial, boyees."

"You hold yer jaw!" exclaimed some one else. "You is too durn fly with yer lip, fer a feller what ain't been hyer more'n a day or two."

"Mebby I am, mebbly I am," muttered Jim-jam, "but I claim ter be white, an' I allus likes ter see fair play. This feller shall have a fair trial, ef my vote wull give him one."

"Ther same hyer!" cried the other of the detectives. "This hyer ar' a sivvylyzed kentry, feller galoots an' liquidarians; an' we don't want ter do no lynch-law business in a matter o' this kind. Let's give him a hearin', anyhow."

"Two or three others in the crowd echoed the same sentiment, but the landlord would not listen to it. The majority were shouting for an immediate hanging, and it indicated that it was going to be a serious matter before it was done with. Dick stood waiting for the result.

"Yer might ez well put up yer guns an' surrender, young feller," the landlord advised. "Et looks like yer has get ter swing anyhow, an' ther more peaceful yer goes off, ther better et wull please ther boyees."

"The boys be hanged, and you with them!" cried Dick. "You must take me for a fool, to put myself in your power if I can keep out of it. I tell you I am innocent, and the first man who attempts to take me, dies! Bear that in mind, all of you, and keep your distance."

CHAPTER X.

THE CASE COMES TO TRIAL.

DICK's eyes flashed, and there was a ring to his tone that brought a halt to the proceedings. It would be an ugly piece of business for some of the "boyees," if they attempted to take him, with his weapons covering them as they did.

"Yes," chipped in Jim-jam Jim, "thet aire ar' ther tune, feller galoots an' p'izen-gulpers, an' I cast my vote with ther accused. This hyer thing has got ter be a fair an' square trial, or et wull be a prelude ter some funerals."

With that he placed himself near Dick, with his revolvers bearing upon the accusing crowd.

"Ther same hyer," cried Wrestling Jacob. "Any feller what kin stand me on top of my ear ther way this one did last night, has a claim on my respect an' affections, an' ez this hyer ragged duffer hev said, et must be a fair trial, or et wull be a funeral. You hear my bazzoo, I reckon, an' understand ther note I'm tootin'."

"An' what hev you fellers got ter do with et?" demanded the landlord. "Mebby you two ar' in caboots with ther cuss, an' had a hand with him in the robbery. What is yer think on that p'int, boyees?"

"Jest ez like ez not!" was the cry.

"String 'em all up together!" shouted one.

"You had better take it easy, and go slow," warned Dick. "I do not ask any help from these two men, and I don't want you to mix them up in the case with me. They are strangers to me. I can take care of myself in this matter, and I'll take care of some of you, too, if you push me."

The disguised speech was dropped, now, and Dick Bristol stood ready to declare his identity, if necessary.

Just then heavy steps were heard on the stairs, mingled with angry cursings, and in a moment two more men appeared on the scene.

One of these was Yaller Mose, the mayor of the town, and the other was a rather gentlemanly-looking man of about forty-five. This latter was Mentor Ogdens, owner of the gold mine at Danger Divide.

"What is this hyer thet I hear?" demanded the mayor, with a terrible oath. "I demand ter know ther hull truth of this hyer business. Who robbed thet aire safe, Hime? Hev yer got ther cuss what done et?"

"Thet's what we hev," Honey Hime assured. "Thet aire ar' him," pointing at Deadwood Dick.

"You're a liar," snapped Dick, defiantly.

"We'll see about thet aire," cried the mayor.

"What's yer proof, Honey? Hev yer got ther thing fastened on ter him?"

"We can't proceed without proof, you know," put in the mine-owner. "There must not be

any guess-work about this, you know, boys; it is a serious thing."

"Et wull be, be gum! ef ther accused don't git a fair trial," spoke up Jim-jam Jim.

"How does it interest you?" asked Ogdens.

"I like ter see fair play, thet's how."

"Well, you shall see it in this case, be sure of that. We always give a man a show up here. The mayor will give you a fair trial, sir."

This to Dick.

"And that's all I ask," Dick assured.

"You see, boys," Ogdens went on, "the mayor and landlord together have the only safe in town, and the rest of us have made use of it. I had quite a sum of the mine's money in it. I came up to get it, just now, in company with the mayor, to pay off my men. We were told that the safe had been robbed, and that the bat of Up-range John had been found near it, and we came right on up here."

"An' ef thet aire ain't proof enough," cried the landlord, "jest look 'e hyer an' see what yer think of this."

He pointed to the stuff that had been found between the mattresses.

"You found that there!" cried Ogdens and the mayor together.

"Thet's what we did," they were assured.

The mine-owner looked at the mayor in a troubled way.

"Mayor," he observed, "this is a serious business."

"Ye're right et ar'!" the mayor cried. "What hev you ter say about et, prisoner?"

"I don't consider myself a prisoner, yet," responded Dick. "And as to what I have to say about it, I am innocent, and have no idea how the stuff came there, nor how my hat came to be found down below. It looks to me like a put-up job."

"Oa, thet aire ar' all bosh!" cried Honey Hime. "Who would want ter put up a job of this hyer kind on yer?"

"I don't pretend to know that," said Bristol, "but I do know that I am innocent, and I demand a fair trial."

"Well, yer shell hev et," promised the mayor. "Give up yer weepins, an' we'll give yer as fair a trial as ye ever heerd tell of."

"Much obliged," said the detective, "but I prefer to keep my grip on my guns. You may call me your prisoner, if you want to, as a matter of form, but as a matter of fact I'll be darned if I am. I think I can convince you, if you only give me half a show for my side of the case."

"Et looks durn bad fer ye a'ready," declared the mayor. "Yer seems ter be afeerd of a fair trial."

"Thet's what he do," shouted the landlord. "Why, ther proof ag'in' him is a dead sure thing, an' there's no chance fer him ter squirm out of et. An' ther next event after a trial wull probably be a hangin'."

"Thet's what et wull!" cried many of the crowd.

Said one man:

"My leetle four hundred dollars what I had saved, an' all gone, with the rest of ther boodle, an' ef this hyer ar' ther cuss what took et, I want ter see him swing, thet's all."

"Yas! Yas! Swing him!"

Such were the cries from all sides.

"As many of you as are in favor of giving me a fair trial, just step over to my side," Dick called out.

The two other detectives had now joined the crowd, and they came over promptly, and so did several others, Mentor Ogdens among the rest.

"Now," demanded Bristol, "where are you going to hold this trial? We may as well go there and get down to business as soon as we can. No use monkeying about the matter, you know."

"Thar'll be no monkeyin', you bet," assured the landlord. "When a pilgrim robs my safe, an' I git ther case dead ter rights ag'in' him, then you bet he'll swing fer et. I don't see ther use of givin' you a trial, but ef Mister Ogdens hyer thinks et ar' proper, why I won't kick."

"Yes, a fair trial by all means," Ogdens decided. "Mayor, you take charge of the case, will you?"

"Thet's what I'm hyer fer," Yaller Mose answered. "Come erlong, galoots, an' I'll open court right out in ther middle of ther street, whar everybody kin see an' hear ther hull business."

"That suits me," said Dick. "Face about, every man of you, and git."

He held a remarkably strong hand, for a prisoner about to be tried for his life.

The crowd turned and filed out of the room,

Dick and his supporters bringing up the rear. Dick and the four detectives having their weapons in hand, ready for immediate use.

"You seem to have got in a bad fix, if you are innocent, sir," the mine-owner remarked.

"And I am innocent of the whole business, that I assure you," answered Dick.

"But, can you prove it?"

"I don't know how that will be. I'll tell you something I can do, though."

"And what is that?"

"I can fight, and if this thing is pushed too hard, you will see somebody getting hurt, mark that."

"Well, I am afraid there is going to come serious trouble out of it, and, really, if you are innocent, I don't see how you are going to explain away the proof against you."

"No, nor do I, but I'll tell a straight story, anyhow."

They were soon out on the street, where a great crowd was assembled, drawn to the spot by the news of the robbery, which had spread rapidly.

The mayor called for a box, which was brought from a neighboring store, and he perched himself upon it and declared that his court was open. And he called upon the landlord of the Pilgrim's Repose to state his case.

"Where's your jury?" demanded Bristol.

"What's ther use of er jury?" cried the mayor.

"Et looks like a plain case, ez fur ez I kin see."

"That sounds like a fair trial, now don't it!" exclaimed Dick, in disgust. "I want a jury of twelve men, and good men, too, or this will end in a fight, right here and now."

"Yes, yes, give him a jury, of course," put in the mine-owner. "What are you thinking about, mayor?"

"Wull, we kin do et, but I don't see ther use."

Dick was looking at the mine-owner. He had an idea that he had heard his voice before, but it seemed that it must have been a long time ago.

"I'm much obliged to you for your interest," he said.

"Oh, don't mention it," Ogdens passed off.

"I'm only interested so far as to see this thing done right."

"And that's all I ask of any of you."

The mayor called men out of the crowd, one after another, to make up a jury, and when Dick had challenged as many as he cared, and had made the best selections he could out of a bad lot, the trial commenced.

Honey Hime proceeded to put his case before the jury about as follows:

"Gentlemen of ther jury, this hyer seems ter me ter be a straight dead sure thing ag'in' ther prisoner at ther bar. This mornin' I found my safe opened and robbed, an' this hyer feller's hat was layin' on ther floor near by. I called some witnesses ter note ther fact, an' then went up ter his room. When he opened ther door he had his poppers in hand, ez if he looked fer trouble. We tackled him on ther matter, an' he denied et. When we kem ter search ther room, though, we found this hyer lot of stuff atween ther ticks of ther bed, whar he'd hid it away. Now ef thet aire ain't a straight case, I'd like ter know what is. Ther feller is a stranger hyer, an' et hits me hard in ther head thet he ar' a reg'lar bank-buster, fer thet aire safe war opened ez slick like et war greased, an' I'll sw'ar thet he hadn't the key, fer I carries thet aire article chained ter me pocket, ez you see et now. Hence, he picked ther lock. Now thet's all I hev got ter say, an' while he ar' tellin' his side of ther case I'll bustle around and git a rope fer him ter dance his death-dance on."

CHAPTER XI.

DETECTIVE DICK WORSTED.

BRISTOL stood in front of the mayor's place. His four detectives were near him, their weapons in hand and ready for use at a second's notice.

All around the five surged the crowd, and they could not help feeling that they were in a bad place, in case it came to a fight. It would be serious for both parties, but probably fatal for the detectives.

When the landlord of the Pilgrim's Repose finished his speech, there was a wild cry for lynching, and a move was made, but the revolvers of the five brought the crowd to a halt. And then the voice of the mine-owner was raised in protest, reminding the crowd that the prisoner had been promised a fair trial, and that it was their duty to see that he got it.

"Yas, yas," put in the mayor, "let's let ther feller chirp his leetle chirp, fer et can't do no hurt anyhow. Say your say, prisoner, an' don't

keep ther court out hyer in ther mornin' sun too long. Haven't had me breakfast yet."

"Neither have I," retorted Dick, "and I guess you can stand it as long as I can."

"You go ahead with yer tale, an' never mind nothin' else."

"Well, I want something to stand on, so I can be seen and heard."

"Sit right up hyer on this box, then," the mayor generously invited. "Et wull hold us both."

So Dick clambered up, and facing the crowd, began his defense.

"Men of Danger Divide," he addressed them, "what I am about to say to you I want you to understand is the simple truth, and nothing else. I am a stranger among you, but I am neither a knave nor a fool, and I hope you haven't picked me up for such. As this case stands, it has a dark look in my direction, I am willing to admit, but you want to bear in mind that circumstantial evidence has hanged innocent men before to-day."

By the time he had proceeded thus far, he had the attention of the crowd, and proceeded without pause.

"According to the story you have heard, my hat was found near the opened safe. How it came there I do not know. Some of the missing contents of the safe were found in the bed on which I slept. I do not know how or when it came there. This is the truth. When I retired last night, I locked my door and fastened the windows. Some time in the night I was awakened, and found four masked men standing by my bed, covering me with their revolvers. They made me get up and dress, and then led me out of the room by a secret door—"

"Ha! ha! ha!" the mayor interrupted with a laugh, "ain't thet aire a likely tale, boyees! Why, I am ther man what had thet aire hotel built, an' kin asseverate thet thar ain't no secret doors in et."

"Too thin! Too thin!"

So chorused the crowd, all around.

"Give me a chance, and I'll prove to you that there is," cried Deadwood Dick. "I was taken out by a secret door, down a long flight of stairs, and when the cellar was reached I was led off through a tunnel—"

This was interrupted by a laugh from the mayor again.

"You durn fool!" he cried, "ther ain't no suller under ther hotel a tall; is ther, boyees? I leave et to ther crowd."

"Nary a suller," was the shout.

Dick felt puzzled, and looked it.

"Yer see his story don't hold together," the mayor observed. "His leetle tale about ther masked men won't go down. It sticks in our necks, hey, fellers?"

"Thet's what et do! Thet's what et do!"

"Then you denounce me a liar, without looking for proof of my statement?" the prisoner demanded.

"What's ther use o' lookin'?" cried the mayor. "Everybody knows thet thar is no suller under ther hotel, and me and ther landlord kin sw'ar thet ther house hev no secret doors."

"Gentlemen of the jury," and Dick addressed them, "will you demand a visit to my room with me, and there let me prove what I asert?"

The foreman shook his head.

"Et ain't no use," he observed. "Yer story don't go down, mister."

"And what do you say about it?" turning to the mine-owner.

"I will express no opinion," was the reply.

"Your talk must be to the jury, sir."

"Jest let me chip in a word," spoke up Jim-jam Jim. "Ther plaintive blat of my bazzoo ar' to ther effect if this hyer jury don't visit thet aire room, yer has had no fair trial, an' thet aire ar' truth in a solid chunk."

"What hev you got ter do with this hyer matter, anyhow?" cried the mayor. "Ef yer don't keep yer head shet, you may dance yer death-dance, too."

"I'll hev company, ef I do," was the reply.

Just then the landlord came back, bearing a rope.

"What," he cried, "hain't this hyer thing settled yet? Thort ye'd be waitin' fer ther rope, sure."

"Hev you said your say, young man?" the mayor asked, of Dick.

"Yes, I am done," Dick answered. "I will hear what the verdict is, and then I may have one word more to say to you. Gentlemen of the jury, once more assuring you that I am innocent, I rest my case."

"Ar' ther everdence in on both sides?" asked the judge.

He was told that it was.

"Then, galoots of ther jury," he said, "et ar' fer you ter say what yer think is about ther matter. If yer finds ther pilgrim innercent, then he gees free, an' yer has no revenger fer ther money he hev stole; but ef yer finds him guilty, then we'll jest h'ist him at ther eend of a rope, an' let him execute his death-dance about a dozen feet clear of ther ground. What's ther word?"

The jury did not leave their seats, but there was some nodding from one to another for a moment, and then the foreman announced:

"We hev found a verdick, jedge."

"Well, what ar' et?" the mayor inquired.

"He ar' guilty!"

"Thet's ther stuff!" yelled some of the crowd. "We'll string him up, you bet we wull! Lay on ter him, an' we'll dangle him from a limb in about one minute!"

"Hold!"

It was Dick Bristol who uttered the command.

He had shoved the mayor off the box, and now held it alone, with his weapons covering the crowd.

The crowd did "hold," for no one seemed to want to be the first to make the attack. And for the moment the Prince of Detectives held the trump hand, by long odds.

"Because twelve of your citizens say that I am guilty, that don't make it so," Dick cried. "Anyhow, you have no right to hang me. All you can do is to hand me over to the sheriff of your county, to await further trial. This is only an examination. I am willing to submit to regular arrest, but to nothing else. It must be that, freedom, or fight. Say which you will have."

When pushed off the box, the mayor had landed upon his head not very gracefully, and he was just righting himself and getting upon his feet, as Dick ended what he was saying.

"We wull have er hangin', thet's what we wull hev, cuss yer!" he cried.

He made a move to draw his revolvers, but one of Bristol's looked down upon him in a dangerous way.

"You want to go slow, now I warn you," the detective grimly suggested. "I am not eager to have any blood spilled here, but if you forec it, on you be the blame. Here are ten bullets in my revolvers, and every bullet is good for a man, for, when it is life for life Deadwood Dick never misses."

The crowd still held back. It was that personal regard that each individual had for his own health that held them in check.

"Come, what are you going to do about it?" Dick demanded. "You, sir," addressing the mine-owner, "can't you advise these citizens what is good for them?"

"I can't interfere any further," Ogdens answered. "You have had your trial, and have heard the verdict. It now rests with you and the mayor, and the crowd in general."

"Hang ther cuss! Hang him! Hang him!" were the cries from the outer edge of the crowd.

"Not by er gol-durn sight yer don't!" chimed in Jim-jam Jim. "Up-range John done me a good turn oncet, and I'll stand up fer him now, be gum! Here's ten more pills in my weepins, ready to purge the system of any galoot what makes ther first move. Ther man is willin' ter be handed over to ther sheriff, an' that's what he has a right ter demand. Yer don't hang him while I kin wiggle, you bet!"

"The same hyer!" cried Wrestling Jacob.

And the other two voiced the same sentiment. The detectives were slightly pale, but grimly determined.

The four stood back to back, covering the crowd in as many directions, and Bristol, on the box, held full view of the entire field.

Still, the crowd hesitated, every man waiting for some one else to make the first move, and no one willing to take that responsibility upon himself. It was a nerve-trying moment.

"Come, citizens, what are you going to do about it?" Dick demanded.

As he spoke, his eyes wandered from the mayor for a second, though his weapon still covered him, and Yaller Mose took advantage of the dangerous opportunity.

With a sudden spring forward, and a yell, he threw himself against the box upon which Dick stood, and, to save himself, Bristol had to jump, just as the box went over.

"At him, boyees!" the mayor cried. "Now's yer time! Git him alive ef yer kin, but ef yer can't, then salt et to him!"

And as one man, the crowd closed in around the five desperate men.

Dick had landed on his feet, close to his friends, and he now gave the ringing order:

"At them, men! We have got to fight our way out of here, so cut the dogs down without quarter! Mow a road through them, and shoot to kill!"

Even as he spoke, his own weapons began to crack, and men rushed from his front hurriedly. Other weapons began to speak, and in a moment the air was full of flying bullets, and a score of men were hit.

Among these were three of the detectives, and only Dick and Jim-jam Jim remained of the five, unhurt.

But, only for a moment, for Jim-jam Jim, too, went down, and Dick's weapons being empty, he was at bay. But, snatching his bowie from his belt, he prepared to fight to the last.

It was useless. He was quickly struck down by a pistol hurled at his head and before he could recover his equilibrium he was pounced upon, his hands were quickly tied behind him, and the rope which the landlord had brought was put around his neck. And then, with insane and hideous yelling, the crowd started down the valley toward the deep canyon, on the brink of which stood a sturdy tree, with a strong projecting limb.

CHAPTER XII.

OFFER OF A NEW DEAL.

DICK BRISTOL was indeed in a desperate situation.

He had no hope; everything was against him; but lion-hearted man that he was he did not wholly despair.

"Yank him erlong hyer," cried Yaller Mose, who had escaped injury, owing to the fact that he had kept his precious body out of range. "Yank him erlong hyer, an' ye kin have ther fun of seein' him dance his death-dance, fer ther good men be hev laid out."

"Yas, yas, pull him right erlong," echoed Honey Hime. "He ar' ther thief sure enough, an' ef he wasn't, he's done enough now ter deserve what he's goin' ter git. Oh, we don't stand no foolin' hyer at Danger Divide, you bet we don't!"

"That's what's ther matter!" chimed the crowd, and their hooting and yelling became deafening, almost.

"Yell, you ruffians! You will live to repent of this day's work," exclaimed the undaunted detective.

The prisoner was hustled along without mercy, and finally came to the spot selected as the place of execution. There was a giant cottonwood, right on the very edge of the deep, dark canyon, and the rope was speedily thrown over the big limb.

Half a score of men laid hold upon the end of the rope, and were ready to pull as soon as the signal was given.

The crowd had now become comparatively quiet, and the mayor ordered silence, and silence soon reigned. Then the mayor said:

"Prisoner, you is erbout ter pay ther penalty fer yer misdeeds. Ef yer has any last word ter say, now is yer time ter chirp."

"And I have something to say," cried Dick, in his clear, ringing voice. "I want to tell you just who I am, and what you may expect if you carry out your intention. I am Dick Bristol, a United States detective, and now a marshal of this Territory, which I have papers to prove. I am better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Yaller Mose. "Haw! haw! haw! You Deadwood Dick! Oh! come, now, what next wull yer be tellin' us? Thet aire ar' too thin, hey, boyees?"

"Wull, raythur thin, we sh'ud say!" cried Honey Hime.

And the crowd enjoyed a hearty laugh.

"But, I can prove it to you," declared Dick, when he could make himself heard. "I can show you my commission, or, if you will take me to Governor Woodlow, he will satisfy you on the point."

"Et won't work," cried Yaller Mose. "Yer can't cram no sich tale ez thet aire down our necks. We is too old birds, don't yer know. Is thet aire all ye hev got ter say?"

"That is all, except that you will repent this day's work. The curse of Deadwood Dick rest on you?"

"Which won't hurt us much, I opine. Boyees, be ye ready ter draw him up, an' give him his death-dance?"

"Ready we is!" was the chorus.

"Then up with him, to ther tune of John Brown's Body!"

The half a score who had hold of the rope pulled, and Deadwood Dick was lifted from the ground, and in the same instant was swinging

in mid-air, right over the edge of the horrible chasm. And as he swung there, the crowd began to chant the tune that had been suggested by their ringleader.

Was the career of the redoubtable Richard to end thus miserably?

It did not seem that there could be any earthly chance for him to escape the doom that was fast closing upon him.

But it was not so to be. Suddenly the sharp report of a rifle was heard, and a bullet sped whistling to the big tree and buried itself in the trunk.

The shot had come from the opposite side of the canyon, and the crowd saw a little cloud of smoke rising slowly in the air. And as they looked, there came another puff and report, the smoke seeming to come from the very face of the solid rocky wall, and another bullet sped across and struck the tree.

The crowd was silent now, and every man was looking at his neighbor, as though to ask what it meant.

Barely half a second elapsed, when a third report was heard, and another bullet buried itself in the tree with a thud. But this time it had accomplished its mission, for the rope upon which the doomed detective hung parted with a snap, and the body dropped out of sight into the depths of the bottomless gorge.

And then, from across the canyon, came a wild, weird and taunting laugh.

The men who had been holding the rope, fell to the ground in a confused heap, and the mayor, the landlord and others, stood and gaped at the vacant place in mid-air where the body had so recently been swinging.

"Wull I ber durn!"

So ejaculated Yaller Mose, he being the first to speak.

And that seemed to echo the sentiment of the whole crowd, for all drew a breath of relief, now that the silence was broken.

"Who in durnation fired them 'ar shots?" cried Honey Hime.

"That's jest what I'd like ter know!" yelled the mayor. "Somebody hev cut ther rope with a bullet."

"Wull, I don't see ez et makes much difference," remarked Honey Hime, "fer he hev gone to ther hot region a-kinin', now, fer sure. I didn't hear him hit bottom, an' I stood right hyer."

"Ther ain't no bottom fer him ter hit," declared the mayor. "Wull, he ar' gone, an' I opine ther settles et. We might ez well go back an' count up ther dead ones thet's layin' around in ther way, an' prepare fer a funeral. Say, it hits me in ther neck now, harder'n ever, thet them aire four fellers what stood to him so well was in cahoots with him."

"And I reckon you're right," Hime agreed. "Oh, et war a pritty game, but et didn't work jest right."

After taking one more lingering look down into the canyon, and listening attentively for some sound from below, but without seeing or hearing anything, save the fall of the creek some distance off, the party filed slowly back to the town, where they had business in the saloons for the next few minutes.

Eighteen men were found dead and thirteen wounded, when the field of battle was gone over. And among the dead were three of Deadwood Dick's coadjutors. The fourth, Jim-jam Jim, was not to be found.

"Whar ar' thet aire cuss what called himself Jim-Jams?" demanded Cross-eyed Simm, who was now an active spirit in the matter.

"Jest what I war thinkin' erbout," said Honey Hime. "I kin sw'ar thet I seen him fall."

"An' so kin I," cried Cross-eyed Simm, "fer I'm ther galoot what plugged him. I seen thet he war about ter dose me, so I up with my pill-box an' dosed him. But, he ar' gone, clean."

There was no doubting that. The ragged, dirty-looking bummer, as he had been considered, was not to be found.

"This is a sad affair," remarked Mentor Ogdens, as he surveyed the field.

"Et war a mighty red-hot one, while et lasted," cried Hime.

"I mean that it is sad that it happened at all."

"Wull, ther durn cuss had no business ter rob ther safe."

"Then you have no doubt about his guilt, eh?"

"Durnation, no! Ther proof war dead ag'in' him."

"Yes, that's so. Well, he will not be likely to rob another."

"Hal hal ha! No, I sh'u'd reckon not."

This was said in public, while the wounded were being cared for, and the dead gathered up,

and the crowd took in the words. There was no doubt in the minds of any but that the stranger, Up-range John, had indeed robbed the safe.

Later on, there was a big funeral at Danger Divide, and that wound up the first deal in the terrible game.

Governor Woodlow was pacing the floor of his office.

The lines of his face were hard and drawn, and his manner worn and nervous.

"Why don't I hear from them?" he muttered.

"It is now two weeks since that fellow, Deadwood Dick, took hold of the matter, and not a word have I had from him yet. There must have something happened."

The door opened, and a man entered.

He was a man of forty, with scraggy hair and beard, and small, blinking eyes. One arm was in a sling, and his head was bandaged.

"Horton! this you!"

So the governor exclaimed, his face paling.

"It is, the little that's left of me," was the weary response, and the man dropped into the nearest chair.

"But, what has happened? Speak, for heaven's sake, and tell me the worst. Where are your partners? Where is Deadwood Dick?"

"They are all dead."

"Dead."

"Every one of them. Webbs, Jones, and Howard, all were shot, and Deadwood Dick was hanged."

"By the powers of hell! but that town shall suffer for this. I will order the soldiers against them! But, tell me your story. Have you seen the missing boy? Do you know if he be alive?"

Has the reader guessed the man's identity? It was James Horton, or otherwise "James James," alias "Jim-jam Jim."

"No, I have not seen the boy," he said, "nor do I know whether he is living or not though I believe he is. I believe Deadwood Dick had an interview with the men, but when or how I cannot imagine. On the morning after his arrival he was accused of robbing the hotel safe. He was given a mock trial, and sentenced to be hanged in short order. He made a fight for his life, and we all pitched in to help him. My three helpers were killed, outright, I was wounded, and Dick was captured and hanged. I saw him led off to a tree, and while the crowd was there, I crawled off into some bushes and got away."

"Then your mission was a complete failure."

"The worst kind of a failure."

Just at that moment a functionary came in and placed a letter in the governor's hand. The governor glanced at it, as the fellow withdrew, and an exclamation escaped him. Hurriedly he broke the seal, and read the following:

"DANGER DIVIDE, July 8th.

"TO GOVERNOR WOODLOW:—

"DEAR SIR:—Your little game did not work. Your detectives only got themselves into trouble, and lost their lives. Why didn't you heed my warning, and act on the square? Now there is just one more chance for you. You send us that twenty thousand dollars—No, I'll make it twenty-five thousand, now. You send \$25,000, by one man, and we will give him the boy and take the money. This is a square offer. This offer is open till the last day of July, and no longer. Now have sense this time, if you want to save the kid's life. Let your man wear a white cross, same as before. He will be safe from harm if it is a square deal.

"Yours for once and all,

"THE EVIL ONE HIMSELF."

CHAPTER XIII.

BEGINNING THE NEW DEAL.

WHEN the governor had finished reading, he handed the message over to the used-up detective, while he paced the floor.

Horton read it through, and when he looked up, the governor demanded:

"What do you make of it?"

"It means business," was the response.

"No doubt of that. What would you advise?"

"You ask my advice?"

"I do, so speak your mind freely."

"Well, governor, of course you want to get your grandson back."

"I would give my right hand, if necessary, to have him restored to me," the austere gentleman declared, earnestly.

"Then my advice is, send the money and make the exchange. If the offer is a fair one, that is, if they mean to live up to it, you will soon have the boy with you in safety. Then you can move against them and give them what they deserve."

"But, suppose they don't mean to act on the square, and take the money and yet hold the boy, how then?"

"You will have to take that risk. If they do

that, then you will have done all you can, and it will only remain for you to swoop down upon the town and wipe the gang out clean. But, I think they mean to act fair in the matter. Anyhow, the only thing you can do is to send the money and take the chances."

"But whom shall I send?"

"Send Murphy, the little Irishman on my force."

"And send him in disguise?"

"No, let him go for what he is. I will post him to keep his eyes open for a clew, and he can pick it up, if there is one to be found."

"Very well, I will act upon your suggestions. Go and get your man, and I will draw the money and have it ready. Then, once let me get the boy safe home, and I will make a little bell for that gang of ruffians!"

Within an hour, Tim Murphy, the detective mentioned, was started upon his dangerous errand, carrying the sum of money demanded, and wearing the white cross upon the left lapel of his coat.

It was night, and Danger Divide was going at full blast.

The saloons were doing their usual thriving business with the debased characters who frequented them.

A big crowd was in the bar-room of the Pilgrim's Repose, and Honey Hime wore a look of supreme satisfaction, and the golden coins tinkled merrily as they dropped into his till one after another.

Peace and order reigned, save for now and then an insignificant brawl among some of the card players, but these little squabbles were nipped right in the bud, and a promising scrimmage prevented, by the unceremonious hustling out into the street of the persons immediately engaged.

Such was the state of affairs when a stranger entered the room, stopping just within the door and looking around.

Strange it is, but let a new-comer enter a place of this kind, and every eye soon finds him out.

It was so in this instance. When the stranger had stood silent for half a minute, every eye was fixed upon him. And then it was that he took off his battered high hat and made an elaborate bow.

He was a peculiar-looking specimen, to say the least about him. His battered high hat has been mentioned. Besides that, he wore a seedy frock coat, much too large for him, a vest the same, and a red flannel shirt just showed at the neck. His trousers were of coarse dark cloth, and terminated in a pair of stogy boots. He wore a pair of old-fashioned spectacles, and carried a baggy umbrella and a carpet-bag.

"Feller galoots an' p'izen-indulgents," he hailed, "allow a humble disciple of Coke an' Blackstone ter greet yer. I am a professional man, and my profession is ther law. What I don't know erbout ther law, ain't wuth knowin'. Ther rest of et I've got in a book hyer in my grip. Takin' your kind permission fer granted, I'll interdocce meself. My name is Fergus Finnegan, Esquire."

With that he made another telling bow, and the crowd laughed.

The stranger turned to the bar.

"Landlord," he inquired, "can you take me in? That is ter say, can you lodge me and feed me? And, if you can do these things fer me, will you allow me to hang out my shingle hyer and make this shebang my headquarters?"

"Yas, I reckon we kin accomodate yer, ef yer has got ther kerdoodleum ter pay with," Honey Hime responded.

"Oh, I've got ther dudads, so don't let a triflin' matter like that worry you," the stranger cried, dropping his bag and bringing a handful of gold coins from his pocket to prove his words.

"Very well, then, we can give yer what yer wants, but I don't opine thet you kin make yer biz pay around hyer."

"Why, how is that?" the lawyer asked.

"Cause we ar' a law unto ourselves, hyer."

"Yas, but thet aire ain't accordin' to Hoyle, don't ye know, not ter mention Coke an' Blackstone. What yer wants hyer, gentlemen, ar' ther prime article, an' I'm ther man what kin give et to yer, straight. Oh, I think we'll make et go, feller-sufferers, an' in order ter cement our buddin' friendship, jest amble up hyer and take a snifter at my expense."

With that, Mr. Finnegan tossed a coin to Honey Hime, and waved his hand for the crowd to step up and indulge.

"Et ar' free to all," he declared. "P'izen yerselves, gentlemen, an' when yer hev done, then I'll register, take a snack ter eat, and retire, fer I am about tuckered out, I tell yer."

The stranger's standing was assured. The crowd pressed forward, and the general comment was to the effect that the new-comer was "a hoss, be gum!"

Some time later, when the weary stranger had had his "snack to eat," he was shown to the room that had been assigned to him.

No sooner had the door closed upon him, though, than his manner changed. A new light burned in his eyes, and shaking his fist in the direction of the bar-room below, he grated:

"Make good use of your time, you devils! The curse of Deadwood Dick is upon you, and a sword of vengeance hangs over your heads!"

Turning his light low, then, he threw himself upon the bed, but not to sleep. His brain was too busy for that.

The hours passed, but his eyes closed not, and finally the house, and for that matter, the town, too, became quiet. And then this stranger drew out his watch and looked to note the time. It was one o'clock.

He waited half an hour longer.

Then he rose, turned up the light a little more, and examined his weapons.

He was well armed, for from somewhere under his coat he brought forth four five-shooters, all self-cockers.

When he had looked well to them, and assured himself that every one was in the best possible order, and ready for any emergency, he replaced them in his hidden belt.

Then he took up the carpet-bag, and opened it. From it he took out a small dark-lantern, and that he lighted. That done, he blew out the light of the lamp, and used the lantern instead. Then he reclosed the bag, put on his hat, and stepped to the door and listened.

Not a sound was to be heard, and he seemed satisfied.

Patting down the lantern for a moment, he stepped back to the bed, opened it, and tumbled it up so that it might seem that it had been occupied, in the usual manner, by some weary pilgrim, even himself.

Placing his umbrella and carpet-bag on the floor, near the head of the bed, he again took up the bull's-eye, and now carefully unlocked the door.

Holding the light out of sight, he looked cautiously out, and assuring himself that no one was around, passed out, leaving the door of his room slightly ajar.

Noislessly he passed along the hall to another room, and tried the door. It was not fastened, and opening it he stepped within, closing and locking it after him.

The room was unoccupied, of course, and when Mr. Finnegan had satisfied himself that he was alone, and that everything was as it should be, he stepped to a distant corner and began to examine the walls with the most painstaking care.

He soon found a crack that seemed to suggest a door, and taking a thin-bladed knife from his pocket, began to follow the crack with it as far as possible. But that was not far. The crack soon came to an end against a solid board. Still, it was to be traced, but in such a zigzag manner that there was no semblance of a door in its many turns.

"If it is a door," the searcher presently muttered, "where is it hinged? And how does it open? There is no room here in this corner for a door of any fair size, and this one must have been as big as an ordinary door, or nearly so."

He was clearly puzzled, but he did not give up.

While he was yet examining the walls, however, he heard a sound, and came to an abrupt stop in his investigation to listen.

The sound was repeated, and continued. It was like heavy steps on a bare stairs, steps made with a regard for caution. It was clear that some one was coming, as the sound came momentarily nearer.

Mr. Finnegan listened attentively in his corner, till he was assured that he was not mistaken, when he hastily crossed the floor, rolled under the bed, and closed the slide of his lantern.

Nearer came the steps, stopping finally on a landing that seemed to be right at hand. There was a pause, then, and the next moment the room was flooded with light, and two men stepped in through a secret door in the very corner where the stranger had been searching.

Mr. Finnegan was looking out from under the bed, and as the door swung open, and its secret was revealed to him, he almost uttered an ejaculation.

It was the whole corner of the room that moved, showing a darkened void beyond. And he did not wonder that he had not been able to find out the secret, for the door was very zig-

zag in form, so far as its outer side was concerned, though the opening it made was straight and true enough.

The men who had stepped into the room were masked, but their disguise was not sufficient to conceal their identity from the man who was watching them. He knew them immediately, even before they removed their masks, which they did, as soon as they had looked around to assure themselves that they were alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEADWOOD DICK TO THE FRONT.

"Ha!" the watcher exclaimed under his breath. "I am not surprised. It is as I thought. I shall bag them yet."

But other steps now sounded on the stairs, and soon another man made his appearance in the room.

This one was not disguised with a mask, as the others had been, but he was a man whom the watcher had never seen before.

"Don't close the door tight, Ben," one of the first pair cautioned. "You are soon going back and will only have the trouble of opening it."

"Yas, that's so," observed he called Ben. "No use makin' extra work fer meself, ez I knows on."

"Not a bit o' use in et," agreed the third. "But, come, don't let's stop hyer. I'll soon fill Bullet Ben out with the grub he wants, an' he kin trudge back."

"Ther sooner ther better," Ben remarked. "This hyer sort night travelin' is n. g. fer a feller what likes his sleep like I does."

"Wull, come on, an' don't make no noise, an' in ten minutes yer kin start on ther back trail, ef nothin' bu'sts."

This speaker carried a lantern, and turning it low, so that there was just light enough for them to see, advanced to the ordinary door to lead the way from the room.

"Hillo!" he immediately exclaimed, "this hyer door ar' locked!"

The man under the bed let a hand fall upon the butt of a revolver.

"Didn't you lock it?" the other asked.

"No, but mebbey you did. You kem in last."

"Maybe I did. I don't remember. I must have done it, I suppose. But, go on, and let's have this business done with."

The man with the lantern unlocked the door, the three passed out, and the door closed after them.

For a moment the man under the bed did not move, but soon he did, and crawling hastily out, he flashed his light around the room, and settled it upon the opened secret door.

"Little wonder that I could not find it!" he exclaimed. "But, I have it now, thanks to good luck, and now I'll learn all about it."

He strode hastily across the floor, pushed the door wide open, and examined its fastenings so that there might be no trouble in his opening it at another time. And that done, he flashed his light down the long stairs, to see that the way was clear, and pulling the door to as he had found it, started down.

He was able to note that the stairs did not follow the line of the house, but led away from it, and by the time the bottom was reached, knew that he must be in the cellar of an adjoining building.

It will be remembered that the mayor of the town had declared that there was no cellar under the hotel itself.

"So far so good," the invader muttered, when the bottom had been reached. "I will beat them, yet, or my name is not Deadwood Dick!"

Ha! then this was the redoubtable Richard, after all!

But, how had he escaped death when he fell—But, let us be patient, and we shall learn all in good time.

Deadwood Dick it was, alive and well, as the reader must have guessed long ere this, and so, for sake of convenience, let us call him.

Dick stood and looked around the cellar for a moment, taking in everything, and carefully laying his plans for further action. This game now meant either victory or defeat, and it was either life or death.

"I will wait here," Dick presently decided.

"That fellow, Bullet Ben, is soon coming back with a supply of rations, according to what I heard them say, and it will be easier to follow him to the hiding-place than to hunt it out myself. I will wait and let him be my guide."

Accordingly, he passed around behind the stairs, and crouching down, turned off his light and waited.

He had not long to wait. Soon steps were heard on the stairs, and as they came nearer,

the cellar began to be lighted by the lantern the comer carried.

When he arrived at the bottom, Dick saw that he carried a bag of provisions, and rightly guessed that this was the fellow who had the keeping of the governor's little grandson.

The fellow did not stop there, but went right on across the cellar and entered a sort of tunnel-like opening on the further side.

Dick allowed him to get a good start, and then crept out from his place of hiding and followed.

As Dick had been this way before, he knew what was before him pretty well, and could have found the way alone, no doubt, to the further opening. But it was easier in every way to follow a guide.

The tunnel sloped downward for a long distance, and then it took a turn upward and held to that till finally it came out into the open air, something like half a mile from the point of starting. And as they neared the opening, Dick drew as close to his guide as he dared approach, so that he could not escape him.

When the unsuspecting guide reached the open, he dropped his pack of provisions from his shoulder, and stopped to rest.

Deadwood Dick stopped, too, and leaned against the rocky wall of the tunnel-like passage.

As the moon was shining, the man here put out his light, and Dick knew that he would have to use more care than ever, not to lose sight of him, and at the same time not be discovered himself.

Presently the man took up his pack and went on, Dick following, and in due time they reached the cavern where Dick had before been allowed a sight of the governor's little grandson. And here again the man dropped his pack, while he relighted the lantern he still carried in hand.

Dick had experienced no trouble in following him, and it only remained for him to continue as well as he had done thus far.

When he had rested a moment, after lighting the lantern, the fellow went on down the cavern, Dick following as carefully as a cat might have done, keeping his eyes fixed on the light.

Presently he saw it go around the bend, where the horseman had disappeared on the other occasion, and he knew that the destination was not much further away. He hurried up, so as not to allow the fellow time to get out of sight, and when he turned the bend, saw the light still leading the way.

This seemed to be a small, transverse fissure of the cavern, and it grew narrower as they advanced, until it was barely wide enough to admit a horse and rider.

Presently another light was seen ahead, and soon the leader of the way passed through into a lighted chamber, where he dropped his pack and set down his lantern.

"Back ergain, be yer?" saluted a shrill female voice.

"Yas, I'm back ergain," the man responded.

"Wull, I'm glad on't, fer this hyer brat hev been squallin' like wild."

"Been squallin', hev he? Didn't yer whale him?"

"Bet yer life I did. But that didn't help him much, fer he sniveled an' snotted till he had my narves all on aidge, an' I'd 'a' gi'n et to him ergain, only he fell ter sleep jast a bit ago."

"Serves him right. Knock et to him, when he don't stop his blattin'. Bet I don't stand none of his whimperin' when I'm around."

"You don't hear much of et, fer he ar' more afeerd o' you nor what he ar' of me."

"An' et's mighty lucky fer him thet he ar', too. I'll be glad when this deal comes to er end, fer I'm tired of livin' in this hyer hole. But et's goin' ter end ther last day of this month, fer if ther governor don't come ter time then, ther kid is ter be killed an' put out of ther way."

"How d'yer know that?"

"I heerd the boss say so. He's sent word to ther Gov., offerin' him one more chance, tellin' him ter send on the dudads at oncet, an' no more foolin', ef he wants ter see ther kid alive ergain, or words ter them same effect. I reckon ther old man will come down with ther spondulix now, seein' et's his last chance. Bnt, let's ter bed, fer I'm ez sleepy as ary stuffed toad."

Deadwood Dick heard all this, and understood perfectly.

He smiled grimly, and his hand toyed with the butt of a revolver. He was greatly tempted to step in and face the miserable wretches.

That was not in accordance with his plan, however, so he resisted the temptation, and leaned back against the rock to await their falling asleep, when he intended to steal the boy and quietly get away.

He had not a great while to wait. There was

but little more talk between the villainous pair, and in a little time the loud snoring of both told that they slept.

Dick then drew a revolver from his hidden belt, cocked it, and stepped into the small, dimly lighted chamber.

The wretched-looking couple lay on a rude bunk in the middle of the floor, and further away, at one side, lay the form of the stolen boy.

Dick stepped over the other sleepers, and advanced to him. And he soon made the discovery that a long dog's-chain was around the little fellow's neck, the end secured high up out of his reach to the rocky wall.

Reaching up and removing the chain from its fastening, Dick gathered it in his hand so that it might not make a noise, and then stooping, lifted the boy in his strong arm, putting his hand over his mouth as he did so to prevent any outcry, and turned to leave the place.

In his right hand he still held the revolver, and in placing the left over the boy's mouth, he had to let go of the chain, and now, as he stepped over the sleepers again, the chain slipped, and the end of it fell, striking Bullet Ben squarely in the face.

His eyes flew open, and he was wide awake in the instant, when, with an oath, he sprung to his feet, reaching for a weapon. This awakened the woman, and she, too, was on her feet with a spring, showing her teeth like a tigress.

"Hands up!" thundered Deadwood Dick. "Make a move toward a weapon, and I'll give you a pill!"

For an instant they hesitated, but, seeing their prize about slipping through their fingers, both sprung toward their common enemy with one accord, the man drawing a revolver and the woman flourishing a knife.

Deadwood Dick did not stand a second about carrying out his threat. His five-shooter spoke, and the man fell dead in his tracks.

"Back!" Dick cried to the woman, "or you will get the same."

"I'll cut your heart in two first!" was the maddened cry, and she made a desperate slash with the knife.

Dick avoided the blade, and gave the woman a push that sent her spinning to the other end of the apartment, warning her again to keep off. But she heeded not, but snatched up a rifle that stood near, and was raising it, when Dick, in self-defense, shot her as he had shot the man. Then, with the crying child in his arms, he hurried from the scene.

CHAPTER XV.

SOMETHING IN THE WIND.

DEADWOOD DICK disliked to take life, but where, as in this instance, his own life was at stake, he did not hesitate.

He hurried on through the narrow transverse passage, then through the larger cavern, and on out into the open air. And there he closed the slide of the lantern he had used so far, and gave attention to the boy.

"Don't cry, my little man," he said, soothingly. "You are in the hands of a friend now, and one who will take you home to your mamma."

The little fellow stopped at once, and asked:

"Do you know my mamma?"

"Yes, and your grandpa, too," Dick assured.

"You shall go to them very soon, now, so don't cry any more, and don't make any noise as we go along."

"No, sir, I won't make any noise at all."

Nor did the little fellow make any, either. He held his arms around the neck of his friend all the way, and kept awake until Deadwood Dick was finally safely back again in his room at the hotel.

There Dick put him down, and closing and locking the door silently, put his bull's-eye light on the sill of the window, where it shone out like a beacon.

Taking a seat at another window, he began to watch the other end of the valley pocket, as though his light were a signal, to which he expected an answer.

And even so it was, for presently another light was seen, off in the direction in which he was watching.

Dick sprung to his lantern, and waved it twice.

The other light waved the same.

And then both lights disappeared, Dick turning his out, plunging the room in darkness, save for the light afforded by the moon, which was enough for his present necessity.

The boy had fallen asleep, meanwhile, and Dick now took him up so gently that he did not wake him.

He passed out of the room and down stairs, carefully, silently, and to the front door, and so on out upon the piazza and to the ground. And as that side of the street was in deep shadow, there he stopped to wait.

Presently a figure in white came flitting across the bridge that spanned the creek, and came toward the hotel with a step so light that it seemed to be floating in the air. Was it the spirit of the gulch? Yes, it was! And it came on straight to the place where Dick was standing.

Dick moved not, only waited, and as soon as the ghostly figure had come up to him, placed the sleeping child in the specter's willing arms.

No word was spoken, but the ghostly figure flitted away immediately in the direction of the canyon gorge.

But it had gone only a little distance, when there was a wild, drunken shout from that direction—the direction the spirit was taking, and the next instant a man staggered out a little distance behind, and bellowed:

"Hyer, citizens! Hyer, hyer! See the speeret of ther gulch! We'll ketch her this time, or I'm a false prophet, you bet!"

The ghost had already sprung into a run, and now this wild-looking fellow went tearing after, at his best speed, revolvers in hand, shouting loudly for the ghostly figure to stop, and threatening to shoot if the order was not obeyed.

Dick saw that the man was too close for the safety of the friendly spirit, and for that of the rescued boy as well, so snatching out one of his revolvers he sent a bullet flying after the fellow, which taking effect in his leg, brought him to the ground promptly.

But that did not end the excitement, nor the danger, for the fellow's wild howlings, and now this shot, brought men flying to the street, to learn the cause of the uproar at that hour.

The first man out caught sight of the ghostly figure, flitting away in the direction of the canyon, and he set up the cry the wounded man had been obliged to drop:

"Ther ghost! Ther ghost! Hyer et goes, on ther double hump fer election, an' now's ther time ter nab et! After et, feller galoots, an' a hundred dollars to ther man what brings et back, dead or alive!"

Dick recognized the voice. It was that of the rascally mayor of the town, Yaller Mose. And he felt inclined to send another bullet hunting for him.

In a moment the street was alive, and Dick now joined in the chase, although his purpose was different from that of the others.

"Ghost of Blackstone, an' spook of Coker!" he exclaimed, as he bounded out with a whoop, "what's all this hyer about, citizens?" And he put himself right in the van, and yelled with the loudest. "What ar' e? I know all about ther law, from one side of ther book to t'other, but darn my old tile ef I am posted on speerets."

"You keep yer peepers on ef," advised a man who was running near him, "an' ef et don't give yer a s'prise, then I'm a liar."

"Why, what ar' et goin' ter do?" the pretending lawyer inquired. "Jest post me, so's I kin enjoy ther klimux."

"Keep yer eyes on et, an' you'll see mighty soon now," the fellow answered.

"Durn me ef I ain't goin' ter try a shot at et!" the disguised detective exclaimed. "I heard some feller shout that he'd pay a hundred dollars fer ther spook, an' Fergus Finnegan, Esquire, ar' on ther make, every time, so here goes!"

Dick had noticed that a new pursuer had sprung out, right close behind the flying spectre, and took this means of disabling him. So he fired, without any seeming care, and the fellow dropped.

But the race was now nearing the close. The canyon was at hand. In a few seconds more the ghostly figure reached it, when, with a flying leap, it went out and down into the dismal depths.

The crowd pressed on, "Fergus Finnegan, Esquire," with the rest, but when they came to the brink of the gorge, nothing was to be seen or heard.

It is needless to quote the comments that were made. The crowd soon turned back, and in a little time the town was again quiet.

Next morning the lawyer was among the early risers.

He took a stroll about the town, greeting everybody he met and giving himself an introduction wherever he stopped. He was bound to be known as well as to know, if that counted for aught.

He was back again at the hotel in time for breakfast, to which he did liberal justice, and after that pleasant duty had been performed, he

set about putting up his "shingle" in the bar-room, as he had gained permission to do. And that "shingle," by the way, was a homely, home-made affair, bearing these words:

"FERGUS FINNEGAN, ESQUIRE,
ATTORNEY AT LAW.
INQUIRE AT
BAR."

When he had posted it up, in a conspicuous place, Mr. Finnegan stood off and looked at it admiringly, with his thumbs thrust in the arm-holes of his vest.

"Ain't et a jim-dandy!" he exclaimed. "An' I done et all meself, too. Oh! I ain't no slouch, I ain't, an' what I don't know about ther law et ain't no use ter try ter find out. Ther rest of et I carry in me grip. Sa-ay, landlord."

"Well?" was the response from Honey Hime. "Ef anybody should inquire fer me, jest pass 'em up ter my room, ef I happen ter be thar, wull yer?"

"Yes, ef anybody should call, I'll send 'em up."

That understanding had, the lawyer took another stroll about the town, and the every-day business of the little valley went on about as usual.

Before night, however, it was noticed that an unusual number of strangers were in town. And still they continued to come. They were mostly rough-looking miners, and only in rare cases were they found paired.

And there was something peculiar, too, though no one seemed to notice it. All of these strangers, on entering, had looked idly around for a moment, but, on seeing the "shingle" displayed by the lawyer, began then to inquire about accommodations for the night.

Finally, along toward the close of the day, one roughly-clad fellow stepped up to the bar and made inquiry for the lawyer.

Finnegan happened to be in his room, and the man was shown up, as Honey Hime had agreed to do.

When he entered the lawyer's room, the door closed after him, and the two were in close consultation for about an hour. And when they finally emerged, and descended to the bar-room, Finnegan drew near to Honey Hime, and with a wink, whispered:

"Thet aire galoot ar' a client. He's good fer a sizable fee. When I git it I'll treat ther house. As ther crib seems ter be full, I hev invited him ter roost with me, so jest book him fer my room. Yer won't lose nothin', you bet. I'm fly, I am, and though me name is humble Finnegan, et orter be Sharp."

He winked again, as he turned away, in a very knowing manner, which Hime seemed to appreciate as something of an honor to him.

About that time yet another new-comer entered the room.

He was an Irishman, as could be seen at a glance, under the medium size, and with a brisk, snappy, business-like air about him. He was clad in an inexpensive suit of brown, and there was nothing peculiar about him, except that on the left lapel of his coat was a small white cross.

Lawyer Finnegan caught that in his eye at first glance, and it caused him a slight start. He seemed to have an interest in the stranger immediately. He edged near the bar, and it did not surprise him greatly to learn that this man found a room, where a score of others had been turned away.

The little Irishman pulled the register around, and in a bold, round hand inscribed his name—

"TIMOTHY MURPHY."

It was, of course, the governor's messenger. He asked to be shown to his room, and he had been there only a short time when he had a caller, none other than Fergus Finnegan, Esquire. The caller remained about half an hour, and when he took his leave it was to go in search of his "client." With him he had another lengthy interview. Something was on the breeze, verily.

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK IN AT THE DEATH.

TIM MURPHY spent the evening in the bar-room.

He was looked upon as a quiet, inoffensive fellow, and one who minded his own business.

There was no one that paid any attention to the white cross he wore on the lapel of his coat, so far as he was able to discover.

It was after eleven o'clock when Lawyer Finnegan sought his room, in company with the man whom he had, as he said, invited to sleep with him.

They went up to the room, but they did not remain there. The lawyer presently came out, quietly, and extinguished the light that was burning in the hall. Then his "client," too, came out, and when the pretending lawyer had locked the door, they went to Tim Murphy's room and entered that.

When they had been gone from the bar-room about twenty minutes, Murphy rose and stepped to the bar and asked for a candle, saying he thought it was time for an honest Irishman of about his size to be in bed.

Honey Hime made a cheery response, gave him a candle, and with a pleasant exchange of "good night," the little Irishman bent his steps in the direction of his room.

When he entered he glanced around, but saw no one, at first. A look behind the headboard of the bed, however, disclosed "Fergus Finnegan, Esquire," and his "client," crouching there.

Tim gave them a wink, but no word was spoken, and putting out the light, the Irishman threw himself upon the bed with his boots on.

As there was no reason why he should keep awake, he took advantage of the opportunity and went peacefully off into a deep sleep, leaving the men at the head of the bed to do as they pleased about following his example.

But there was no sleep for them. Upon their wakefulness depended the success of the scheme they had in hand, and it is not necessary to affirm that awake they remained.

It was a long vigil, but gradually the house became silent, and then the street, and then the watchers began to look for the coming of the masked men for whom they waited.

Finally, when their patience was about giving out, and they felt that they must stretch their limbs, the faint sounds of footsteps reached their ears.

The steps came nearer, but were still very faint, as no doubt the approaching persons were using the greatest caution to be as silent as possible. And presently the secret door swung open, light flashed into the room, and four masked men entered, closing the door after them.

The little Irishman on the bed slept peacefully on.

When the door had been closed, the masked men advanced to the bed, ranged themselves alongside of it, and one took hold of Tim's foot and gave it a shake.

This awakened him promptly enough, and he sat up with a start, exclaiming:

"What the devil do yez want? How did yez get in here?"

"We are here on business," answered the leader of the party.

"And what is your business?" Tim demanded.

The man reached out his hand and laid a finger on the white cross.

"Oh-ho!" Tim exclaimed. "You are the devil himself, are ye, and it is the money yez are wanting."

"That is the whole thing in a nutshell," the spokesman of the party assured. "Have you brought the money with you?"

"Yes, I have it with me," Tim made answer, "but it is devil a sight will yez get of it till I see the boy with me two eyes, so if yez mean a square deal, trot him out."

"And a square deal is what we do mean," was the assurance.

"Have yez got the boy?"

"We have."

"And he is alive and well?"

"He is."

"Trot him out, then, and we'll exchange."

"You must come with us to where he is. There we will make the exchange, and you can set out from there upon your return immediately."

Deadwood Dick had hesitated about acting, for the purpose of learning whether or not these men had yet learned of the loss of the boy. He was satisfied, now, that they were yet unaware of what had taken place in the cavern.

"All right," agreed Tim, getting up on his feet, "just as you say. I am here to make a square deal with yez, by the governor's orders, and I'll take your word for it that it is a square deal I am to have. Put up your pistols and lead the way."

"We'll do that, but you must allow us to blindfold you."

"Yez may do that, too, if you want to. Me orders is to do just what you want me to, for the governor wants the boy, and wants him bad. Do as ye please with me, so long as yez do what's right."

"I admire your good sense," the spokesman complimented. "And it proves that the governor isn't lacking in the same. If the first

man he sent here had acted as well, or rather if the first deal had been a square one, it would have been better for his health. Blindfold him, boys."

The others had put away their weapons, now, and stepped forward, and the leader thrust his revolver back into his belt.

"Hands up!"

Startling was the order, but not more so than the sudden springing out of the two men from behind the head of the bed, their cocked revolvers covering the rascally four.

"Up with them!" Deadwood Dick cried, "or something is going to drop!"

"Yes, put 'em up!" chipped in Tim Murphy, into whose hands had sprung a pair of "fives," at the first command. "Put 'em up, I say, or we'll bore yez!"

There was nothing else to be done. Their hands went up.

"And now, Murphy, handcuff them," Deadwood Dick directed.

That was accomplished almost before the fellows realized their fate, and the masks were torn from their faces.

The four were—Mentor Ogdens, the mine-owner; Yaller Mose, the mayor; Honey Hime, proprietor of the hotel; and Cross-eyed Simm.

"Rascals," spoke Deadwood Dick, "your little game is up. We have got you in the toils, and you must suffer for your crimes. We hold the best hand this deal. I am Deadwood Dick, at your service, and this gentleman with me is Sheriff Winthrop, of this county."

The four prisoners recoiled, pale as death.

"But, the boy, the boy!" gasped the mine-owner. "You can't get him without our help! Let us go, and we will place him in your hands, and without a cent of ransom, either. You must let us go!"

Bristol smiled.

"That boy is already in my possession," he informed, "and Bullet Ben and his worthy consort are dead. Oh, you are trapped, and there is no hope for you. I have a hundred men in and around this house, all armed to the teeth. You have played a bold game, my fine fellows, and you won on the first deal, or thought you did, but everything is mine this turn. There is no help for you, not a bit."

Next morning Danger Divide was thrown into a state of greatest excitement.

Sheriff Winthrop had charge of the hotel, with a posse of more than a hundred men, and the town was in their hands.

Deadwood Dick, in his proper person, was on hand, and was acting in his official capacity as marshal, Sheriff Winthrop obeying his directions in everything, as ordered by the governor.

No work was thought of. The whole population was in the street, and the news of the arrest of Ogdens and the others was the one matter of conversation.

Early in the forenoon a special stage rolled into the town, and from it alighted Governor Woodlow, with two or three men with him.

Deadwood Dick advanced to greet him, and the two shook hands.

"Glad to see you alive!" the governor congratulated.

"And I'm glad to say that the boy is safe, as well as your money," Dick responded, "and that the murderer of your son is under arrest."

"The murderer of my son arrested! Who is he?"

"Mentor Ogdens, the mine-owner here."

"Heavens! Can it be true?"

"We have proof of it."

"Let me see the dog! Let me get within reach of him! Let me—"

"There, there, governor," Dick broke in, "you must do nothing rash. Remember, you are the head of the law in this land, and the law must take its course. That will be the best sort of revenge."

On the afternoon of the day on which Tim Murphy had set out for Danger Divide, the governor had received a communication from Deadwood Dick, telling him that he was alive, and asking him to come on at once to the Divide. The governor had set out on the following morning, early, and had pushed forward with all haste.

It will be remembered that on the afternoon of Deadwood Dick's arrival at the town, he found a note pinned to the horn of his saddle, put there while he was on the plateau in conversation with Cross-eyed Simm. That individual, by the way, had been posted there to look out for a traveler wearing a white cross on his lapel, to direct him to the Pilgrim's Repose.

The note in question was signed "Wizard of the Canyon." This person was a woman, and one who had known Deadwood Dick, and for whom he had once rendered a service. Seeing him when he came up the gulch, and knowing something of the danger he was running into, she took that means of warning him.

This woman's name was Celia Donnelly, and she it was who had played for so long the role of Spirit of the Gulch. Her purpose was to haunt Mentor Ogdens, who had once done her a wrong that could never be forgotten, much less forgiven. When seen in the valley, was usually when she had been paying a visit to the mine-owner's cabin near the mine, and her way of escape was to run and spring off into the dark gorge, where she knew none dared follow. She took upon herself the task of keeping a watchful eye upon Deadwood Dick, to be ready to lend him help should he need it at any time. On the morning of his arrest, she took note of all that was done, and when he was swung up to the limb of the tree on the brink of the canyon, she was on the other side, armed with a rifle, and while out of sight of the crowd, it was her bullet that cut the rope and let Dick drop into the gorge.

At that time, the time when the saving shot came to his rescue, Dick believed that his race was run, and that this was his death. In fact, he was beginning to experience the horror of strangulation, his brain was swimming, and flashes were dancing before his eyes. Suddenly he felt himself going down—down. He fancied that must be death. But in a second or two, as it seemed, and as it was in fact, he brought up suddenly in some sort of a support that yielded to his weight, and actually flung him back, catching him again, and now holding him gently yet firmly. And there he lay, helpless and dizzy. All around him was coldness and darkness. And there he lay until the woman who had saved him came to his further rescue. He felt the thing on which he was held sway and tremble, and presently a voice broke the silence. His bonds were cut, the rope was taken from his neck, and he was led carefully to a place of safety.

The thing that had broken his fall was a huge net, swung across the gorge and held in place by powerful supporting wires. It was into that net that the Spirit of the Gulch had landed, on jumping off into the dismal canyon at different times, and it was that net that had saved the life of Deadwood Dick.

And the motive for the murder of the governor's son, that was love, or rather insane jealousy. The governor's son and Mentor Ogdens had loved the same woman. Ogdens had asked for her hand in marriage, and had been refused. A short time later she married the younger Woodlow. Ogdens then vowed that he would spoil her happiness, and waited patiently for time enough to pass so that no suspicion could be directed toward him. Then, he murdered his successful rival and stole the boy, leaving the poor wife and mother to suffer a sorrow that drove her nearly insane. But in taking the boy he overreached himself. His crime was suspected by some men at Danger Divide, when the news of the murder and abduction reached there, after these men had learned that Ogdens was paying Bullet Ben and his wife for the keep of a child that had come suddenly into their hands. They accused Ogdens, and he had to admit the truth to them, and in order to buy their silence, offered to put the boy up for ransom, turning the money over to them as soon as he might get hold of it.

Crime never pays in the end. Ogdens paid the penalty on the gallows, and the other three, with some associates, shared the same fate, for the death of the detectives who had lost their lives in the governor's cause. There was a general clearing out at Danger Divide. Honest men, for the most part, took the places of rascals. And the mine that Ogdens had been working, that was awarded by the court to Celia Donnelly, who is still in possession. James Horn-ton and Tim Murphy are still detectives on the governor's staff, both able men. The governor is still in office. As for Deadwood Dick, he was handsomely rewarded for his part in the case, and when he took his leave of the governor, the latter assured him of an everlasting friendship. Dick will sometimes talk about his personal adventures and narrow escapes, when in the right mood and in congenial company, and always refers to this adventure as his "death-dance," and about as narrow an escape as he ever had. But the real "Death-Dance," he always adds, came in later, when that "Double Deal" took its second turn.

THE END.

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